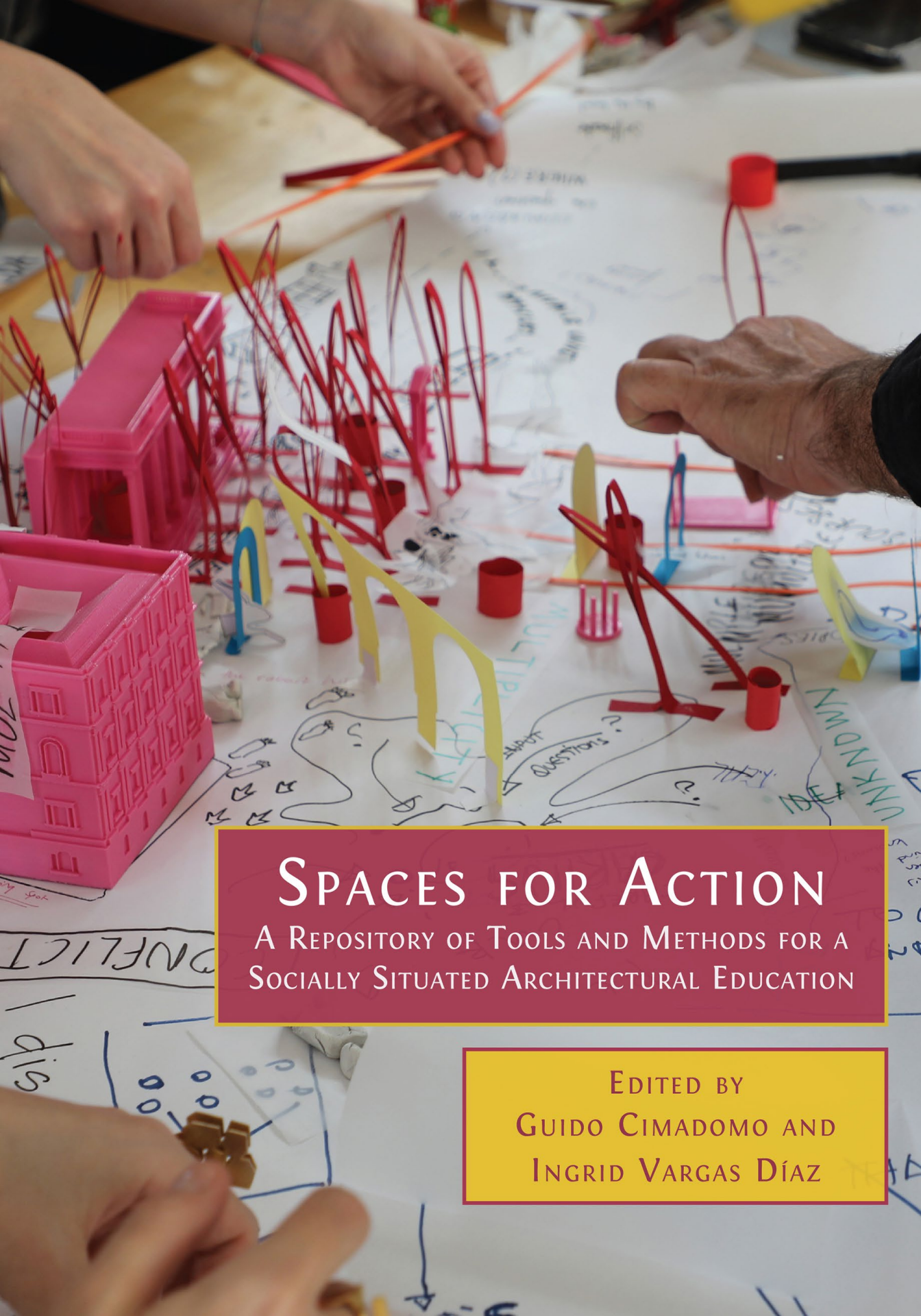




SPACES FOR ACTION

A REPOSITORY OF TOOLS AND METHODS FOR A
SOCIALY SITUATED ARCHITECTURAL EDUCATION

EDITED BY
GUIDO CIMADOMO AND
INGRID VARGAS DÍAZ

SPACES FOR ACTION



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A Repository of Tools and Methods for a
Socially Situated Architectural Education

*Edited by Guido Cimadomo
and Ingrid Vargas Díaz*



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Table of Contents

How to Use the Repository	vi
<i>Aitana Bravo Rabaneda, Alba Cortés Galán, María Carmona Calero, María García Castro</i>	
Alphabetic Index of Tools and Methods	viii
Index by Stage and Type	xii
Categories and Subcategories	xix
The Need for a Repository of Tools and Methods for Socially Situated Architecture Pedagogies	xxvii
<i>Ioanni Delsante</i>	
Introduction	1
<i>Guido Cimadomo and Ingrid Vargas Díaz</i>	
The Construction of the Repository of Socially Situated Tools and Methods: About its Methodology	5
<i>Ingrid Vargas Díaz and Guido Cimadomo</i>	
Repository of Tools and Methods	19
UNDERSTANDING STAGE	21
IDEATION STAGE	99
IMPLEMENTATION STAGE	185
Epilogue. Situating Tools and Methods	215
<i>Aslihan Şenel and Caroline Newton</i>	
Contributors	221
References	225

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María Carmona Calero, María García Castro*

*Aitana Bravo Rabaneda, Alba Cortés Galán,
María Carmona Calero, María García Castro*



...I want to check out a Tool or Method
I know by the name



- UNDERSTANDING STAGE
- IDEATION STAGE
- IMPLEMENTATION STAGE

What I want is to design a whole learning experience, focusing on how and which skills the student will learn...

*Then explore our clear classification by **Categories and Subcategories** to quickly identify the pathway that best matches your intended learning outcomes...*

page xix

*...after that, go through the **Repository of Tools and Methods** looking for the icons or check the index of each stage!*

pages 22, 100 & 186



Cooperative & Collaborative Learning



Experiential Learning



Transformative & Radical Experiences

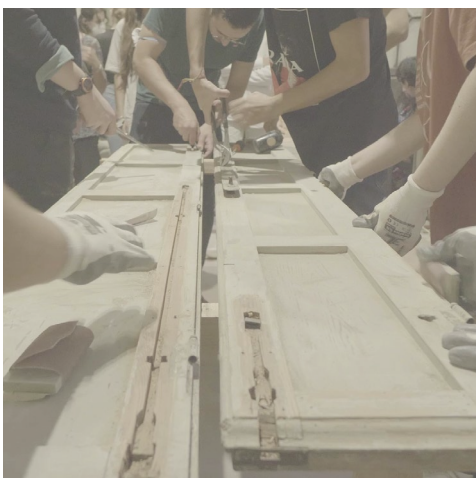
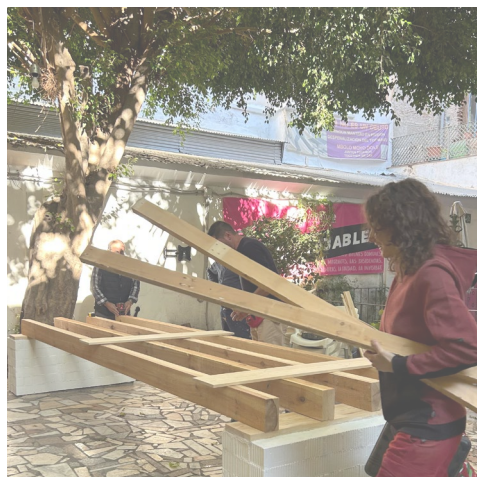
Intergenerational and interdisciplinary
Open classroom and mutual knowledge
Service learning



Learning by doing
Learning by building
Design-build



Credit-less programmes
Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Accessibility (EDIA)



Workshop "Casa Invisible," Malaga 2023



ALPHABETIC INDEX OF TOOLS AND METHODS

 1:1 Scale Prototyping or Testing Prototype	  	188
 Affective and Emotional Mapping	  	26
 Affinity Diagram or the KJ Method	  	104
 Affordances	 	106
 Assemblage Drawing	  	28
 Biographical Method	  	108
 Bodystorming	  	30
 Brainstorming	  	110
 Brainwriting	  	112
 Bruno Munari Method	  	114
 Collaborative Mapping or Citizen Mapping	  	34
 Collage in Research	  	32
 Community Mapping with Children	  	36
 Concept Mapping	  	116
 Conceptual Framework	 	118
 Counter-storytelling	  	38
 Critical Thinking Mindset	  	120
 Democracy Cube	  	190
 Dérive or the Dream-like Drift	  	40
 Design Charrettes	  	122
 Design Games	  	124
 Diffractive Drawing	  	42
 Dilemma-driven Design	  	126
 Draw (how to make) Toast	  	128
 Empathy Mapping	  	130

 Essayistic Filmmaking	  	44
 Expert Panels	  	192
 Filmic Mapping	  	46
 Fishbone Diagram or Ishikawa Diagram	  	132
 Five Whys	  	134
 Flow Exercise	  	136
 How Might We	  	138
 Ladder of Participation	  	194
 Life Road Maps	 	140
 Life Story	  	48
 Literature Review	  	50
 Livingston Design Method	  	142
 Mapping in Design Studio	  	52
 Mind Maps	  	144
 Mosaic Approach	  	54
 Novelty, Attractiveness, Feasibility Study (NAF)	  	196
 Oral History	  	56
 Participant Observation	  	58
 Participation Matrix or Stakeholder Participation Planning	  	60
 Peer to Peer	  	198
 Personas	  	62
 Phillips 66	  	146
 Photo Walk	  	148
 Planning Cell	  	150

	Pop-up Infrastructure	  	200
	Problem Tree Analysis	  	152
	Queering the Archive	  	64
	Quick Voting Tools: Dot Voting and Barometers	  	154
	Reading With	 	66
	Reflective Journals	  	68
	Research Storytelling	  	70
	Research Surveys	  	72
	Role Playing	  	74
	Safaris	  	76
	SCAMPER (Substitute, Combine, Adapt, Modify, Put to Another Use, Eliminate and Rearrange)	  	158
	Scenario Analysis	  	156
	Self-Evaluation in Architectural Design Studios	 	202
	Semi-structured Interview	  	78
	Sequential Embedded Experimental Method	  	160
	Shadowing	  	80
	Situated and Critical Storytelling in Design Studio	  	162
	Six Thinking Hats	  	164
	Small Experiments or Simulations	  	204
	Socially Situated Crit	  	206
	Socially Situated Live Projects	  	208
	Socially Situated Research-Led Teaching	  	84
	Social Mapping	  	82
	Sociogram	  	86
	Speed Dating Design Method	  	166

 Stakeholder Analysis	  	88
 Stakeholder Journey Mapping	  	90
 Stokes	  	168
 Storyboarding	  	170
 Storytelling	  	172
 Student Evaluation Survey	  	210
 Students Tutor	  	212
 SWOT Analysis	  	174
 Synectics	  	178
 System Mapping	  	176
 Timeline	  	92
 Transect Walk	  	94
 Value Proposition Canvas	  	180
 VIPP - Visualization in Participatory Programs or		
Card Clustering	  	96
 World Café	  	182

INDEX BY STAGE AND TYPE

Understanding Stage

Analysis Tools

Participation Matrix or Stakeholder Participation Planning	60
Stakeholder Analysis	88

Collective Knowledge Production and Commoning Methods

Assemblage Drawing	28
Diffraction Drawing	42
Mapping in Design Studio	52
Queering the Archive	64

Data Collection Methods

Participant Observation	58
VIPP - Visualization in Participatory Programs or Card Clustering	96

Data Collection Tools

Community Mapping with Children	36
Life Story	48
Mosaic Approach	54

Data Collection and Analysing Tools

Literature Review	50
Timeline	92

Data Collection and Analysing Methods

Reading With	66
--------------	----

Data Collection and Assessment Tools

Reflective Journals	68
---------------------	----

Data Collection and Decision-making Tools

Counterstorytelling	38
Oral History	56
Transect Walk	94

Decision-making Tools

Bodystorming	30
Role Playing	74

Decision-making and Data Collection Tools

Affective and Emotional Mapping	26
---------------------------------	----

Project-based learning

Socially Situated Research-Led Teaching	84
---	----

Subjective Analysis Tools

Essayistic Filmmaking	44
Filmic Mapping	46

User Data Collection Tools

Collage in Research	32
Collaborative Mapping or Citizen Mapping	34
Dérive or the Dream-like Drift	40
Personas	62
Research Storytelling	70
Research Surveys	72
Safaris	76
Semi-structured Interview	78
Shadowing	80
Social Mapping	82
Sociogram	86

Ideation Stage

Adapted Theoretical Concepts	
Affordances	106
Analysing Methods	
System Mapping	176
Value Proposition Canvas	180
Analysing Tools	
Critical Thinking Mindset	120
Flow Exercise	136
Analysing and Decision-making Methods	
Storytelling	172
Analysing and Prioritising Methods	
Affinity Diagram or the KJ Method	104
Analysing and Problem-solving Methods	
Conceptual Framework	118
Mind Maps	144
Synectics	178
Analysing and Problem-solving Tools	
Concept Mapping	116
How Might We	138
Photo Walk	148
World Café	182
Collective Knowledge Production and Building Learning Community Methods	
Situated and Critical Storytelling in Design Studio	162
Data Collection and Analysing Methods	
Biographical Method	108
Decision-making Methods	
Design Charrettes	122

SCAMPER	158
SWOT Analysis	174
Decision-making Tools	
Brainstorming	110
Design Games	124
Empathy Mapping	130
Life Road Maps	140
Phillips 66	146
Quick Voting Tools: Dot Voting and Barometers	154
Scenario Analysis	156
Decision-making and Assessment Tools	
Six Thinking Hats	164
Decision-making, Reaffirming User Needs and Assessment methods	
Sequential Embedded Experimental Method	160
Speed Dating Design Method	166
Energiser Tools	
Stokes	168
Problem-solving Methods	
Bruno Munari Method	114
Problem Analysis Tools	
Five Whys	134
Problem Tree Analysis	152
Storyboarding	170
Problem Analysis and Decision-making Methods	
Dilemma-Driven Design	126
Planning Cell	150
Problem-solving Tools	
Brainwriting	112
Draw (how to make) Toast	128
Problem-solving and Analysing Tools	
Fishbone Diagram or Ishikawa Diagram	132
User Data Collection and Decision-making Methods	
Livingston Design Method	142

Implementation Stage

Assessment Methods

Self-Evaluation in Architectural Design Studios	202
Socially Situated Crit	206

Assessment Tools

Democracy Cube	190
----------------	-----

Data Collection and Assessment Tools

Student Evaluation Survey	210
---------------------------	-----

Decision-making and Assessment Tools

1:1 Scale Prototyping or Testing Prototype	188
Expert Panels	192
NAF (Novelty, Attractiveness, Feasibility study)	196
Pop-up Infrastructure	200
Small Experiments or Simulations	204

Decision-making Tools

Ladder of Participation	194
-------------------------	-----

Peer Learning and Assessment Methods

Peer to Peer	198
Students Tutor	212

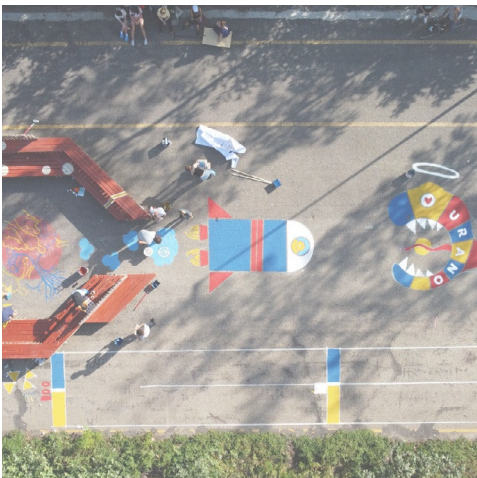
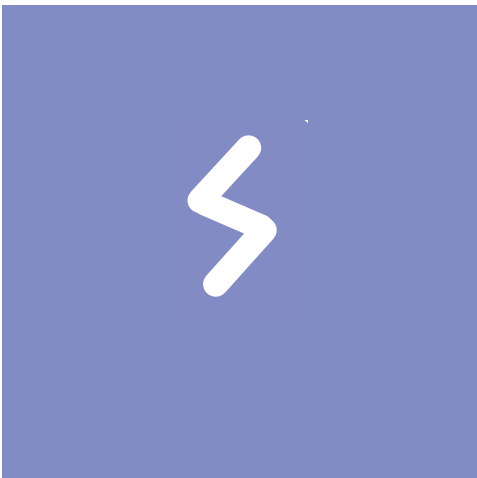
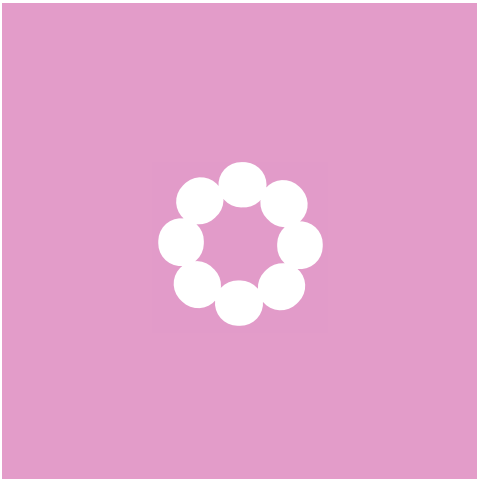
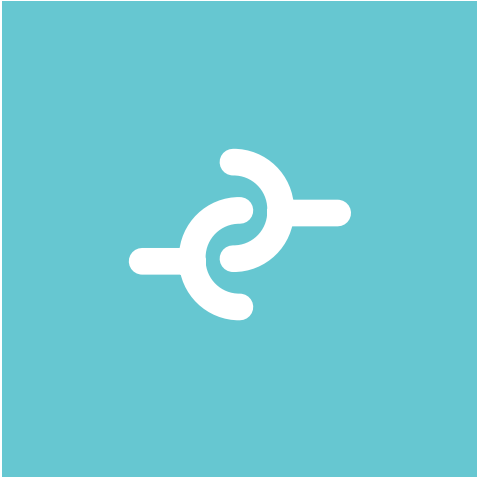
Project Based Learnings

Socially Situated Live Projects	208
---------------------------------	-----



Design Studio P02, Malaga 2023





International Summer School, Pavia 2023

CATEGORIES AND SUBCATEGORIES

Cooperative & Collaborative Learning:

Cooperative Learning Methodology is based on cooperation between groups of students with different levels of training and different concerns to achieve a final objective. It assigns specific responsibilities to individuals, who then coordinate their parts collectively. Cooperative and Collaborative Learning demands active involvement and joint efforts from all participants to solve problems.

Experiential Learning:

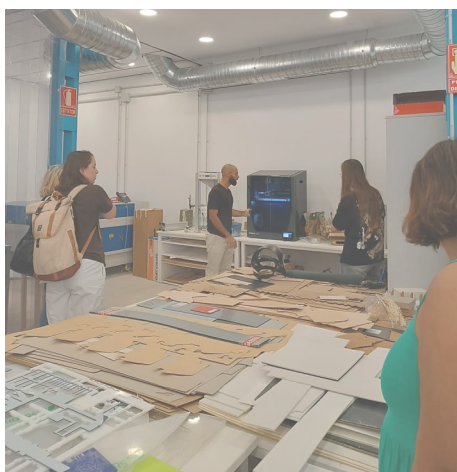
Experiential Learning emphasises the central role that experience plays in the learning process. It is a process of learning by doing in which the students are engaged and learn by reflecting on the experience they develop. It focuses more on the process of learning than on the outcomes, as learning is a continuous process grounded in experience which involves transaction between the person and the environment. Students' progress is assessed by how they develop experiential activities, show critical thinking and acquire analytical skills rather than how much knowledge they have acquired.

Transformative & Radical Experiences:

Transformative learning, according to Mezirow (1997), is the process of changing one's frame of reference, including beliefs and attitudes. People often resist new ideas that challenge their existing beliefs. Transformative learners, when given the opportunity, move toward a more inclusive and reflective perspective. This transformation involves critically examining assumptions and integrating new information into their existing beliefs. Meaningful learning occurs when learners actively engage with new concepts, relating them to their lives and collectively assessing their validity. To facilitate this process, learners can engage in various methods such as critical incidents, metaphor analysis, and social action projects. Radical experiences, as explored in the Radical Pedagogies project, view architectural pedagogy as more than just a space for reflection, training, and rehearsal. They see it as a realm of action, reaction, and interaction. These experiences are radical in that they return to the roots of architecture, challenging the status quo and questioning modernist and colonial norms. They shift the focus away from traditional building methods, redefining the roles of architects and envisioning more participatory forms of practice.



Cooperative & Collaborative Learning



International Summer School, Malaga 2025



Intergenerational and Interdisciplinary

Intergenerational activities or programs promote cooperation, interaction, and exchange among people of different generations. Participants share knowledge, resources, and support, enhancing not only individual lives but also benefiting the wider community. These initiatives create opportunities for people, families, and communities to thrive in a society that embraces individuals of all ages, fostering a sense of inclusivity and mutual support. Interdisciplinarity involves the combination and application of knowledge, methods and approaches from different disciplines to address complex problems and foster a deeper and more holistic understanding of an issue at hand.



Open Classroom and Mutual Knowledge

According to APA (2023), the concept of an open classroom redefines the role of the teacher, considering them not merely as a “knowledge transmitter” but as a facilitator. This approach emphasises students’ rights to make decisions and might involve integrating students from various grades in the same classroom, incorporating independent study or unstructured time, and flexible curricula. In a broader sense, as proposed by Castro Estrada et al. (2013), the open classroom becomes a flexible space bridging the university and the community. It promotes a culture of dialogue and reflection on traditional teaching roles. Key elements include teacher collegiality, interdisciplinary teaching and learning, and a cohesive approach linking professional development, research, and community cooperation. This comprehensive perspective aims to transform education by encouraging collaboration, dialogue, and holistic growth.

Interdisciplinarity involves the combination and application of knowledge, methods and approaches from different disciplines to address complex problems and foster a deeper and more holistic understanding of an issue at hand.



Service Learning

Service-learning, as defined by the Corporation for National Service, is a method wherein students learn and develop through active participation in well-organised service experiences addressing real community needs. These experiences are integrated into the academic curriculum and offer structured reflection time, extending learning beyond classrooms into the community (Taylor, 1990). Furco (1990) emphasises that service-learning stands out from other experiential education methods due to its intention to benefit both the service provider and recipient. It ensures equal emphasis on the service provided and the learning process, fostering a balanced focus on community engagement and educational growth.

APA - American Psychological Association. (2023). *American Psychological Association Dictionary*. APA <https://dictionary.apa.org/open-classroom-method>

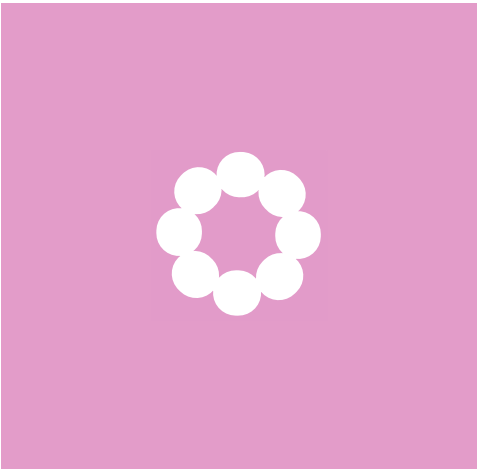
Castro Estrada, M.L., Rodríguez Rejas, M.J., Urías, E.U., (2013). Abriendo las aulas: la vinculación entre docencia, investigación y cooperación comunitaria. *Revista Electrónica Interuniversitaria de Formación del Profesorado* 16, 33-47. <https://doi.org/10.6018/reifop.16.3.186741>

Furco, A. (1996). Service-learning: A Balanced Approach to Experiential Education. In B. Taylor (ed.) *Expanding Boundaries: Serving and Learning*, 2-6. Corporation for National Service.

Taylor B. (ed.) (1996). *Expanding Boundaries: Serving and Learning*. Corporation for National Service.



Experiential Learning



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●○○○ Learning by Doing

Learning by Doing integrates approaches that emphasise personalisation and hands-on experience, drawing from pragmatism to engage students actively in their learning process. They encourage students to transition from passive to dynamic participation, fostering a proactive role in their own education. In this philosophy, every lived experience instigates change, facilitating a profound understanding of reality. Students reflect as they develop their projects, which means that they have to think before doing, while doing, and after the activity is finished (Guevara Álvarez, 2013; Montellano Tolosa, 2003).

○○●○ Learning by Building

Learning by Building involves incorporating those pedagogical processes that engage students in both the design and construction phases of a project, starting from the initial planning stage. It emphasises the practical construction aspects and considers external factors that could impact the architecture significantly (Deplazes et al., 2017).

○○○● Design-Build

This is a pedagogical category where students not only create design artefacts like sketches, models, and technical drawings typical of studio courses but also engage in the entire project delivery process. This includes strategies that involve managing client relations, collaborating with engineers, creating construction documents, obtaining permits, handling project management and budgeting, and even fundraising. Additionally, other tools and methods that seek to have students physically construct the full-scale structure on a real construction site. This approach emphasises intuition, harnessing the creative potential of manual labour, and fostering interaction between the architect and the material world (Nicholas & Oak, 2020; Chamel, 2016).

Chamel, O. (2016). Design/build: a Relevant Pedagogy for Architecture Education, *Vitruvio International Journal of Architectural Technology and Sustainability*, 1, 53-65. <https://doi.org/10.4995/vitruvio-ijats.2016.6773>

Deplazes, A., Linares De La Torre, Ó., & Salmerón Espinosa, M. (2017). Learning by Building. Dos experiencias didácticas de la Cátedra Deplazes ETH-Z. In D. García Escudero & B. Bardí Milà, (eds). *V Jornadas sobre Innovación Docente en Arquitectura (JIDA'17)*, Escuela Técnica Superior de Arquitectura de Sevilla, 16 y 17 de Noviembre de 2017, pp. 23-137. Iniciativa Digital Politècnica. <https://doi.org/10.5821/jida.2017.5218>

Guevara Álvarez, O.E. (2013). *Análisis del proceso de enseñanza aprendizaje de la Disciplina Proyecto Arquitectónico, en la carrera de Arquitectura, en el contexto del aula* [PhD. Thesis. Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona].

Montellano Tolosa, C. (2003). *Sala de espejos múltiples: práctica profesional reflexiva del Taller de Proyectos* Universidad Tecnológica Metropolitana. Santiago de Chile.

Nicholas, C. & Oak, A. (2020). Make and Break Details: The Architecture of Design-build Education. *Design Studies*, 66, 35-53. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.destud.2019.12.003>



Transformative & Radical Experiences

International Summer School, Malaga 2025

●○ Credit-less Programmes

Credit-less Programmes involve methods implemented in activities that aim to remove the concept of “credit” as a term tied to profitable learning, which is closely associated with the Bologna Plan and, by extension, the public university system. As discussed by Morten & Harney (2010) and Blasco & Insúa (2018), the approach seeks to reframe the notion of debt in education. It emphasises a “right to debt” that is associated with social and mutual obligations rather than financial transactions or economic credit. This perspective challenges traditional market-driven narratives of education, focusing instead on communal and non-economic relationships.

○● Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Accessibility

Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Accessibility programs include the practical tools and methods for transforming classroom settings into inclusive environments. This is crucial in our contemporary context of multiculturalism, particularly in education. Despite the societal push for diversity and understanding, there remains a lack of substantial dialogue on how to implement inclusive learning experiences. To genuinely honour the social realities and experiences of historically marginalised communities, teachers across all levels must recognise the need for a shift in their teaching approaches (hooks, 1994).

Blasco, S., & Insúa, L. (2018).

Programa sin créditos en modo celebración. Relatos sobre comunidades artísticas de aprendizaje.
Ediciones Asimétricas.

hooks, bell. (1994). *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom.*
Routledge.

Morten, F., & Harney, S. (2010). Debt and Study. *E-flux Journal*, 14.
<https://www.e-flux.com/journal/14/61305/debt-and-study/>



International Summer School, Brescia 2023

THE NEED FOR A REPOSITORY OF TOOLS AND METHODS FOR SOCIALLY SITUATED ARCHITECTURE PEDAGOGIES

Ioanni Delsante

Introducing this volume first means talking about the SArPe project, an acronym for “socially situated architectural practices.” It is a European project, classified as the Erasmus+ Cooperation Partnership (KA2) (2022-2025), which involves four universities from four different countries: TU Delft (Holland), the University of Malaga (Spain), the Istanbul Technical University (Turkey), and the University of Pavia (Italy) coordinator of the project, for which I am responsible.

The SArPe project was created to provide answers to questions, doubts, and open issues that the teachers (educators) involved felt they shared regarding the teaching of architecture, in their locations, and in their experience abroad, including in South America, China, and England.

The first is the inadequacy of the design studio to respond to the challenges posed by contemporary society (Dutton, 1987, among many others). Here, the first question arises, to which the proposed (subsequently approved) project provides an explicit answer: what should the architectural project deal with? I believe that, in terms informed by experiences in Britain, design studios have the opportunity to deal with the issue of “tackling global challenges.” In particular, as can be seen from the title, the project intends to dedicate itself to the challenges of a social nature that may include social inequalities and their effects in terms of access to the city, housing, and quality (Awan et al., 2011), or the impact of social discrimination on the development and organisation of the city, for example, in terms of which services or infrastructures are absent or located in a non-uniform manner or not accessible for entire urban areas.

This is essential for understanding the reasons behind the SArPe project before we attempt to understand its results or the tools involved. This means having the awareness and determination to ensure that the architectural project is not isolated in abstract exercises disconnected from reality. It is also very important because there are architecture schools and approaches that instead make speculative reasoning, sometimes utopian or dystopian.

As a consequence, the reference to global challenges forces architecture to take a look at the reality, which typically involves complex challenges that require solutions of a creative nature, and in my opinion a design nature. There are often also challenges to which there is

not yet an answer and which often require the contribution of multiple disciplines, but I will return to this later. I would define this type of attitude not as a mere form of realism, which would mean lowering the ambitions of designing, but rather as a form of utopian realism in which the concept of utopia for a better and perhaps unrealisable future remains and permeates the project. This approach does not imply a resignation to pragmatism but rather encourages a balance of idealism and practical engagement (Lefebvre, 1996).

Therefore, orienting the architectural project towards global challenges and forcing it to deal with reality has a very strong consequence: the project is not a neutral tool but rather a tool aimed at achieving objectives that go beyond mere construction. The opposite hypothesis of a neutral project not immersed in the challenges that the realities pose, is also becoming more and more often a tool in favour of the global financial lobbies that transform architecture into an instrument sometimes unable of reaching logics that are very distant from disciplinary origins (Heynen, 1999). Architecture in that case is emptied of any critical and ethical content in favour of logics that are sometimes hidden but pervasive and which do not enhance the ethical dimension. If anything, they only enhance the aesthetic one (it would be necessary to question which aesthetics or, better yet, whose aesthetics?) (Grosz, 2001).

A further point of reflection is that of teaching linked to research, which in English is termed “research-led teaching.” Here, I try to summarise one of the consequences of this approach: first, I ask questions prior to the project about, for example, what the needs or requirements of a certain place and a certain community are (Boyer & Mitgang, 1996). Activity planning therefore arises following these questions, and the project is therefore not an unavoidable fact but rather a strong response to certain needs. There could also be cases in which the project does not include certain volumes or does not include them at all because it deals with landscape and open spaces.

What are these questions? Finding good questions may not be easy, and it may require time and preliminary activities. The summer school held in Brescia in 2023 was enlightening in this sense: working in the context of particular social fragility, such as Casa San Vincenzo, means asking and asking yourself (research) questions. What are the objectives of this project? What are the realistic and achievable ambitions within the time frame set? This does not mean that even before starting a project, one must necessarily have all the challenges and questions (or even the answers). In fact, during the summer school the direct interaction with residents completely moved our initial position towards new agencies, reflected in the actions and in the projects developed on-site. So taking such an approach means acknowledging that the process may—and sometimes must—take time. Istanbul Technical University colleagues, in the second edition of the summer school held in Istanbul (a year later, in 2024), made this clear when they coined the term “slow cooking.”

When proposed to students, one of the key aspects of this approach is that it stimulates a critical understanding of the reality around us. The project brief therefore does not prescribe the fact of constructing a certain building in a certain place, but rather provides a functional and even formal response to the layout of a certain place or as a response to a need mapped on the ground.

Therefore, the SARPe project’s tasks include reconstructing the state of the art (setting the scene). Certainly, the partners came from different backgrounds and paths, so the literature review investigated topics that were distant from each other, but which we had preliminarily

hypothesised and could have a partial overlap. These included situated (Haraway, 1988) or situationist forms of architectural design, critical and radical pedagogy, and forms and manifestations of the commons compared to pedagogy, not only at universities. Another task involves creating a “repository of tools and methods”: based on a survey of those that can be used in teaching architecture. It is intended as a collective tool that arises from the collection of methods that are also very different from each other. At the same time, the intention is for it to be a dynamic tool; although we had set ourselves a quantitative objective to achieve within the project, this tool is intended to be open and unfinished. In this sense, the repository, in addition to being open access, is a tool that is tested during the improved and updated project and will offer itself to other experiments well beyond the end of the project, in turn welcoming results and requests from outside.

Why a repository? Brandt et al., (2013) discuss the value of having a repository of participatory design methods in teaching and practice, emphasising how such collections help design professionals and students identify and apply appropriate tools for involving stakeholders in the design process. Looking at the list of tools and methods collected, to which multiple research units contributed, it seems to me that I can assume and recognise three categories of elements.

Firstly, a series of tools of an interdisciplinary nature are suitable for studying, interpreting, and analysing the physical as well as social context in which the project will be placed. This category includes conventional tools, such as SWOT analysis, and others that are more particular and open to the critical interpretive dimension of the reality of the world, such as psycho-geographic drift (Brandt et al., 2013). The second category collects those elements that certainly belong conventionally to the teaching of architecture, but which here are interpreted and modulated in relation to the objective of the project, which is to place itself close to the social dimension of the territory. Here, concepts such as “live projects” have been reinterpreted and modulated in a more specific way. Finally, the third category collects more specific pedagogical elements: how to organise and carry-out a design laboratory. The concept of affordances, for example, recalls the importance of the spatial organisation of design studios and the way in which teachers and students interact. However, it also concerns the practices of interaction between students, as well as between students and stakeholders or representatives of society and, in particular, the territory on which we will intervene as designers.

First Experiments: Design Studios in Pavia and Summer Schools

Referring precisely to the experimental nature of the project, I have taken the liberty of mentioning what was done in the first two years of activity of the design laboratory in Pavia.

The SARPe project achieved a double effect: firstly it allowed us to reflect on those methodological tools that we had already been using for some time, thus also allowing critical reflection on their use. Secondly, it allowed us to broaden our perspective and hypothesise the development of the analyses and the project at different times and in different ways, in relation to the training objectives and students' responses.

This is particularly interesting because it shows that the set of tools that are used in an educational cycle is in fact a dynamic set that is calibrated based on the specific needs of that place and the project. I will try to explain myself better: the design work in Borgo Ticino (a neighbourhood of Pavia in which we redesigned a public park with community

spaces) and Locate di Triulzi (in the Milanese hinterland) demonstrate a broad convergence of analytical techniques and design tools. However, they also show the need to conform some of the tools and the sequence and both analytical and design scales to the specificity of both the places and communities involved in the project (Delsante et al., 2024 and 2025). Therefore, to correspond specifically to the fatal framework to produce an adequate analytical and planning output, the toolbox provided by the SARPe project allows one to have more choice, to reflect on these tools, to critically analyse your own work and to always question it and improve it, year after year. In fact, one of the activities envisaged by the SARPe project is that of discussing every year with the academic partners regarding the revision of the syllabuses of the courses involved in the project. In this sense, the purpose of this repository is not a mere catalogue or list like a dead letter, but rather a tool to be put into action and exploited to ultimately improve the quality of teaching in design laboratories. To be clear, this occurs in a non-impositional manner in a parallel but independent manner in different locations and voluntarily by the teachers involved in the project. It is essentially a form of monitoring and self-evaluation that allows us to set the goal of improving teaching, and not a form of control or performance expected or requested from outside.

Having put together an initial repository of methods and tools for teaching architecture with specific reference to situated pedagogical practices is both a result and starting point. It is a result in the sense that it required making choices and “giving a name to things”: a certain “tacit knowledge” which expresses in architecture a knowledge of the place and its imaginative potential (*genius loci*) is made explicit here (Norberg-Schulz, 1980). This means that there are some tools in your “toolbox.” These tools, with a methodological approach similar to that used in research, can be used to answer certain questions.

Investigate the Processes

It is important to underline how this repository is also a useful tool for investigating the processes and phenomena that we find ourselves in front of as designers. Many of the tools that have been catalogued allow us to provide more detailed answers to investigate the reference context in which the project is carried out more deeply, also in spatial terms.

Here, this specificity towards the context is the attitude that we define as situated: it can represent a position or the position of the researcher very close to the object of their research, but it can also mean that the selection of tools refers to practices or techniques capable of bringing out those specific elements that other methods would not be able to do. We are discussing highly subjective methods or methods based on creative and artistic techniques, which is clearly a position in which cognitive tools of a subjective and artistic qualitative nature can be just as suitable as other perhaps more popular tools of a more quantitative or objectifiable nature. This interest in the specificity of the places and communities that live there is also reflected in the fact that this repository will then want to be translated into the different languages of the sites and contexts in which it can be applied because this is a tool that would like to be shared with those stakeholders to whom the tool is proposed and on whose territories it is applied in some way.

In conclusion, I want to underline as a hope for the research some elements that emerge from the very first experiments and which may guide the next ones: the tools that this repository collects are intended to be suitable for research located in the contexts in which they are located or very close to the objects of the research that you undertake and the

objects or territories you want to investigate. This approach is clearly derived from a choice that is very distant from the prevailing attitude in the media and in many sector magazines. Favouring the depth of gaze, sometimes to the detriment of time or speed of execution or results in formal terms, is also a choice. It will clearly be the result of the project and specifically the outcomes derived from the use and growth of this repository, which will give us an indication and perspective on the meaning of this initiative.

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International Educators Workshop, Delft 2025

INTRODUCTION

Guido Cimadomo and Ingrid Vargas Díaz

The Socially Situated Architectural Pedagogies (SArPe) project emerges with the intention of local and European-wide experimentation—among the association’s partners—with new roles, tools, and pedagogical strategies in the field of architecture. The city cannot be understood solely as a physical environment consisting of buildings and infrastructure but fundamentally as a social environment made up of multiple, complex realities that interact and coexist within the act of inhabiting. This understanding necessitates collective decision-making, commitments, and agreements for the benefit and prosperity of urban environments and their inhabitants. For these measures to be effective, they must be grounded in a thorough understanding of the realities at play.

The evolution of urban models, increasingly homogeneous, often reflects the powers governing the city when, in fact, they should respond to the fabric of bonds, values, lifestyles, and relationships of its citizens (Harvey, 2008, p. 23). This multiplicity underscores the growing necessity for the participation of all social agents in decisions regarding urban policy direction. Empowerment, particularly of weaker and underrepresented groups, is paramount to avoid social injustice. Horizontal decision-making is viewed as an essential step toward achieving better and fairer outcomes, grounded in the diverse experiences individuals have of their surroundings and their particular personal and collective needs they must meet in order to progress.

Participation and horizontal approaches in learning processes are among the principal pillars of the SArPe project, which aims to embed these orientations in the education of architects. These professionals are fundamental agents in urban transformation processes, seen not merely as prescribers and technicians responsible for designing and constructing urban environments but also as mediators among the various stakeholders involved in the building process. The project promotes a participatory and experimental laboratory where participants actively engage, making the process their own. This participatory nature not only enhances learning but also fosters a sense of belonging and commitment, which is essential for generating a lasting impact in the communities involved.

The premise that individuals actively participating in the formation and management of a place contribute to its better functioning (Wates & Knevitt, 1987), motivates the project to immerse future architects in dynamics that not only enhance their development as critical

thinkers but can later be employed in their professional practice, creating new social and urban dynamics. Collaborative architectures extend participation, previously limited (Pantić et al., 2021), to all phases of the project. The ultimate goal of involving diverse agents in this process is to facilitate exchanges of techniques and knowledge necessary for the comprehensive appropriation of urban environments where human activities unfold. Community work, far from being a mere aggregation of individual efforts, emerges as a space of exchange and co-creation where shared experiences enrich collective outcomes.

The collaborative dynamics proposed by SARPe encourage the integration of diverse perspectives and foster the development of solutions tailored to the real needs of urban environments. Situated pedagogies not only redefine knowledge production as a collaborative and multifaceted process but also propose a dynamic connection where all actors involved, drawing from their personal and subjective experiences, contribute to a more open, flexible, and context-specific formal education (Haraway, 1988).

A new approach to architecture, where all parties involved play a role in defining both needs and the solutions to address them, inevitably requires new procedures. While these methodologies are not yet dominant in the current landscape, they have been under experimentation for a considerable time. The repository presented here, the outcome of collaborative work within the SARPe project, is our contribution to analysing, comparing, and representing various approaches to situated architectural pedagogies. This repository compiles, through existing literature and the experiences conducted during the project, a set of methods and tools made available to anyone interested in employing or implementing them—whether tutors or learners in educational activities or individuals involved in real community programs.

Designed to facilitate comparison, analysis, and strategy adaptation, the repository encompasses over 80 documented experiences, offering a toolbox to select the most suitable tools and methods based on context, constraints, and objectives of the intervention. It spans all phases of the design process. This repository is conceived as an open, freely accessible document, aspiring to grow and inspire new developments, with the expectation that future contributions will include new methods and tools, especially in light of the evolution of digital environments in education and other societal domains. Among the limitations encountered, the absence of native digital practices is noted, with most relying on adaptations of practices originating in analogue environments (Vargas-Díaz et al., 2024). The guiding questions for each repository entry—"what," "why," "how," and "with whom"—serve as entry points into the proposed dynamics, accommodating both novices to participatory practices and those familiar with them but seeking more tailored solutions. Notably, these questions align with the four pillars of education: learning to know ("what"), learning to do ("how"), learning to live together and learning to live with others ("with whom"), and learning to be ("why") (Delors, 1996).

In summary, this repository aspires to serve as a toolbox to support educators, learners, and architects in their work to enhance urban environments through situated collaborative practices. These practices root project decisions in the context of the place, relying on knowledge derived from the exchange of experiences, opinions, and expertise with its inhabitants.

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THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE REPOSITORY OF SOCIALLY SITUATED TOOLS AND METHODS: ABOUT ITS METHODOLOGY

Ingrid Vargas Díaz and Guido Cimadomo

This chapter describes the methodology applied in the development of the repository of socially situated tools and methods and reflects on its implementation and adaptation to current pedagogical contexts in the teaching of architecture. Developed within the framework of the Socially Situated Architectural Pedagogies (SArPe) project, the repository serves as a directory of easily accessible, implementable, and adaptable pedagogical strategies. Aligned with the project's core objectives, it promotes educational activities that address contemporary challenges and foster student engagement with the agents and collectives shaping their physical, social, and economic environments. Additionally, it facilitates the analysis, comparison, and representation of different approaches to situated architectural pedagogies while compiling a diverse range of practices and experiences. Many of these have been implemented in "live projects," "action research projects," or "service-learning projects" driven by the social demands of various communities, making them valuable resources for students, educators, and other stakeholders involved in real community-based educational programs.

The research process, which has generated two open-access databases on Zotero, consists of two stages. The first phase involves a literature review of best practices in socially situated teaching in architecture, based on the Sequence Quantitative Literature Review Methodology. In the second stage, methods and tools are extracted and systematised for their understanding and application, providing both theoretical and practical references relevant to the field of architecture.

Developing the Repository of Socially Situated Pedagogies in Architecture

The first phase of the research process that led to the creation of the repository takes as its theoretical basis two relevant pedagogical models, linked to the objectives of the SArPe project: learning by doing by Gibbs (1988) and the experiential learning model of David Kolb (1984). With the former, the emphasis is on the use of teaching practices and reflection as fundamental elements to achieve conscious learning, and with the latter, reasoning about "how others perform a task," in order to then conceptualise what is observed. In this sense, we learn through the experiences of teachers in different contexts, analysing their results, the evolution of their proposals and the students' responses once the exercises have been completed. Therefore, the starting point of the repository could not be other than the

search for and subsequent analysis, through a literature review, of good teaching practices socially situated in different geographical and social contexts.

The objective of this literature review of good teaching experiences was to find a wide and diverse range of perspectives that would help contextualise the project within contemporary pedagogical debates in architecture and lay the groundwork for “socially situated architectural pedagogies.” For this purpose, theoretical perspectives on various active methodologies linked to the project were correlated with the best architectural practices identified.

Based on SQLR (Systematic Quantitative Literature Review) methodology (Pickering & Byrne, 2014), the exploratory questions were defined: What is the current state of research on “socially situated” pedagogical practices in architecture? Where and how are these practices implemented, and what tools and methods can be extracted? Next, an iterative systematic search process of keywords and phrases was employed, and third, search databases such as Web of Science and Scopus were identified. Initially, the search was conducted using phrases related to methodologies of recognised situated pedagogies in architecture, such as “service learning in architecture,” “design build,” “transformative learning in architecture,” “critical pedagogies in architecture,” “learn by doing in architecture,” “learn by building in architecture” and “experiential learning in architecture.” Additionally, and due to the fact that in some cases there were practices specifically linked to the professional field, the initial results were filtered by adding the word “education” or “pedagogy.” Although it is common to restrict the search to peer-reviewed academic journal articles, in this case, to maximise the results, conference proceedings, books, and open-access book chapters were also included.

The initial evaluation process involved carefully reviewing the title, abstract, and keywords to determine their relevance to the subject matter. The result of the analysis yielded a total of 125 items, which were added to a Zotero database¹ and subjected to a second evaluation. This review focused on the content of the publications, aiming to identify significant pedagogical tools and methods, excluding contributions that offered a less reflective perspective. The documents were grouped using methodological categories and subcategories, which are explained below. Texts were highlighted, and significant notes were added to each article considering its relevance, pedagogical experience, and the potential to extract socially situated tools and methods. This process resulted in a total of 79 relevant documents available in Zotero.

The repository is built from the results obtained in the literature review of best practices and pedagogical experiences. The study of these practices allowed the extracted strategies to have real evaluation parameters, as they have been tested, most of them repeatedly, within the framework of architecture education in various contexts. Once these methods and tools were identified, a bibliographic research phase was initiated for each of them. This literature review allowed the creation of an open database in Zotero with a total of 230 items.

The creation of this new database was based on the identification of strategies whose development demonstrated innovative application with the clarity necessary to be easily replicable. A total of 24 socially situated methods and 52 tools applicable to architecture

¹ https://www.zotero.org/groups/5011866/sarpe_literature_review_of_tools_and_methods/library

education were extracted and completed with the own experiences of the members of the project.

The repository design finally includes various sections detailing key aspects of each strategy, facilitating their comparison, analysis, and alignment. It defines what the method or tool is about, why it should be used, how it should be applied including each of the steps to be followed, the number of students to be implemented, the resources and with whom it could be implemented. Lastly, for those seeking further exploration, the repository provides theoretical references for each strategy alongside academic resources demonstrating real-world applications in architectural education (Vargas-Díaz et al., 2024a; 2024b). This confirms the open, living, modifiable and adaptable nature of the repository, which, to date, has a total of 89 entries, 36 of which are methods and 54 tools.

Analogue, Blended, and Digital Learning Environments: Applications, and Strategy Classification

This section delves into the categorisation of strategies within the repository, highlighting their adaptability across various learning environments. Strategies are organised into categories and subcategories aligned with pedagogical methodologies, providing a comprehensive framework for educators to navigate and implement these tools effectively. This classification system is designed to capture the multifaceted nature of each strategy, considering factors such as its utility in different design stages, its application based on the type of strategy, and its disciplinary origins. This structured approach not only facilitates the practical application of strategies but also enhances their relevance to diverse educational contexts, as further elaborated in the subsequent section.

Each entry of the repository collects data such as the strategy's usefulness based on its classification by design stage, its application according to the type of strategy, the discipline from which it originates, and their classification into categories and subcategories according to pedagogical methodologies, which are explained in the following section.

Pedagogical Categories and Subcategories. Classification of Strategies and Definitions

The detailed information obtained for each of the methods and tools allowed a first classification according to various pedagogical categories in which they are commonly applied (Table 1) (SArPe, 2024). In this way, all the identified strategies were classified into methodological categories and subcategories, as detailed below:

Category 1: Cooperative and Collaborative Learning, which involves, on one hand, groups of students with different levels and concerns collaborating to achieve a goal, assigning individual responsibilities and coordinating efforts collectively; and, on the other hand, students actively participating and working together to solve problems (Dillenbourg et al., 2009; Johnson et al., 1999). This category is subdivided into the following subcategories:

1.A. Intergenerational and Interdisciplinary, including strategies that promote cooperation, interaction, and exchange among people of different generations, fostering a sense of inclusivity and mutual support; and other tools that involve the combination and application of knowledge, ideas and approaches from different disciplines (Mannion, 2012; Kandiko, 2012).

METHODOLOGICAL CATEGORIES AND SUBCATEGORIES	CATEGORIES	SUBCATEGORIES
	1. Cooperative & Collaborative learning	1.a. Intergenerational & Interdisciplinary
		1.b. Open Classroom & Mutual knowledge
		1.c. Service Learning
	2. Experiential Learning	2.a. Learning by Doing
		2.b. Learning by Building
		2.c. Design-build
	3. Transformative & Radical Experiences	3.a. Credit-less Programmes
		3.b. Equity, Diversity, Inclusion & Accessibility

Table 1. Pedagogical categories and subcategories.

1.B. Open Classroom and Mutual Knowledge, those tools and methods that help to redefine the role of the teacher, considering them not merely as a “knowledge transmitter” but as a facilitator (APA, 2023). These strategies emphasise students’ rights to make decisions and might involve integrating students from various grades in the same classroom. In a broader sense, the open classroom becomes a flexible space bridging the university and the community. This comprehensive perspective aims to transform education by encouraging collaboration, dialogue, and holistic growth (APA, 2023; Demacio et al., 2022). They include tools and methods that also focus on mutual knowledge, enhancing learning about others and fostering positive reinforcement of self-awareness (Ramon, 2019).

1.C. Service Learning, including those pedagogical tactics wherein students learn and develop through active participation in well-organised service experiences addressing real community needs. Service-learning stands out from other experiential education methods due to its intention to benefit both the service provider and recipient. It ensures equal emphasis on the service provided and the learning process, fostering a balanced focus on community engagement and educational growth (Furco, 1996).

Category 2: Experiential Learning, which emphasises teaching through experience, focusing more on the process than on the results. Students are evaluated based on their participation, critical thinking, and analytical skills developed through experiential activities, and not just by the acquisition of knowledge (Kolb, 1984; Salama, 2013). This category is subdivided into the following subcategories:

2.A. Learning by Doing, integrating approaches that emphasise personalization and hands-on experience, drawing from pragmatism to engage students actively in their learning process. They encourage students to transition from passive to dynamic participation, fostering a proactive role in their own education. In this philosophy, every lived experience instigates change, facilitating a profound understanding of reality. Students reflect as they develop their projects, which means that they have to think before doing, while doing, and after the activity is finished (Guevara Álvarez, 2013; Montellano Tolosa, 2003).

2.B. Learning by Building, incorporating those pedagogical processes that engage students in both the design and construction phases of a project, starting from the initial planning stage. It emphasises the practical construction aspects and considers external factors that could impact the architecture significantly (Deplazes et al., 2017).

2.C. Design-build, as a pedagogical category where students not only create design artefacts like sketches, models, and technical drawings typical of studio courses but also engage in the entire project delivery process. This includes strategies that involve managing client relations, collaborating with engineers, creating construction documents, obtaining permits, handling project management and budgeting, and even fundraising. Additionally, other tools and methods that seek to have students physically construct the full-scale structure on a real construction site. This approach emphasises intuition, harnessing the creative potential of manual labour, and fostering interaction between the architect and the material world. (Nicholas & Oak, 2020; Chamel, 2016).

Category 3: Transformative and Radical Experiences, which, according to Mezirow (1997), involve changing a person's beliefs and attitudes by critically examining assumptions and integrating new information. It fosters change through methods such as critical incidents and social action projects. The Radical Pedagogies project (Colomina et al., 2022) views architectural education as a space for action and interaction, challenging colonial norms and redefining the role of architects in favour of more participatory practices. This category is subdivided into the following subcategories:

3.A. Credit-less Programmes, with methods implemented in activities that aim to remove the concept of "credit" as a term tied to profitable learning, which is closely associated with the Bologna Plan and, by extension, the Public University system. As discussed by Moten & Harney (2010) and Insúa & Blasco (2018), the approach seeks to reframe the notion of debt in education. It emphasises a "right to debt" that is associated with social and mutual obligations rather than financial transactions or economic credit. This perspective challenges traditional market-driven narratives of education, focusing instead on communal and non-economic relationships.

3.B. Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (EDIA), including the practical tools and methods for transforming classroom settings into inclusive environments. This is crucial in our contemporary context of multiculturalism, particularly in education. Despite the societal push for diversity and understanding, there remains a lack of substantial dialogue on how to implement inclusive learning experiences. To genuinely honour the social realities and experiences of historically marginalised communities, teachers across all levels must recognise the need for a shift in their teaching approaches (hooks, 1994).

Classification of Strategies Based on the Stage of the Design Process

Similarly, a comparative analysis of the main characteristics and objectives of the methods and tools was conducted, which allowed their classification according to the stages of the design process in which their implementation would be most useful. The design phases, which partially align with the methodological proposals of the Design Thinking model (Moreira-Cedeño et al., 2021), were studied and defined. In the first stage, defined as the understanding phase, 38 strategies were identified; in the second stage, the ideation phase, another 38; and in the third stage, the implementation phase, a total of 13 tools and methods were classified (Table 2).

Understanding	Ideation	Implementation
Participant Observation	Problem Tree Analysis	Small Experiments or Simulation
Mosaic Approach	Value Proposition Canvas	Ladder of Participation
Card Clustering or VIPP	Five Whys	Democracy Cube
Life Story	Life Road Maps	1:1 Scale Prototyping or Testing Prototype
Stakeholder Analysis	Design Games	Student Evaluation Survey
Community Mapping with Children	Storyboarding	Pop-up Infrastructure
Role Playing	Bruno Munari Method	Expert Panels
Personas	Speed Dating Design Method	Socially Situated Crit
Shadowing	SWOT Analysis	Socially Situated Live Projects
Research Storytelling	Phillips 66	Peer to Peer
Safaris	Sequential Embedded Experimental Method	Self Evaluation in Design Studios
Stakeholder Journey Mapping	Dilemma-Driven Design	Students Tutor
Counter-storytelling	Scenario Analysis	NAF (Novelty, Attractiveness, Feasibility study)
Semi-structured Interview	Empathy Mapping	
Affective and Emotional Mapping	Brainstorming	
Collaborative Mapping or Citizen Mapping	Biographical Method	
Dérive or the Dream-like Drift	System Mapping	
Research Surveys	Quick Voting Tools: Dot Voting y Barometers	
Oral History	Livingston Design Method	
Social Mapping	Design Charrettes	
The Participation Matrix	Brainwriting	
Collage in Research	Concept Mapping	
Transect Walk	World Café	
Sociogram	Planning Cells	
Timeline	How Might We?	
Reflective Journals	Flow Exercise	
Reading With	Stokes	

Photo Walk	Draw (how to make) Toast
Fishbone Diagram or Ishikawa Diagram	Critical Thinking Mindset
Bodystorming	Six Thinking Hats
Literature Review	SCAMPER
Socially Situated Research-led Teaching	Affinity Diagram or KJ Method
Assemblage Drawing	Synectics
Diffraction Drawing	Mind Maps
Essayistic Filmmaking	Conceptual Framework
Filmic Making	Storytelling
Queering the Archive	Affordances
Mapping in Design Studio	Situated and Critical Storytelling in Design

Table 2. Classification of strategies by stages of the design process.

Although the strategies were classified according to the stage in which their application was considered most useful, most of them can be implemented in various phases within the design process. Therefore, far from considering creative development as linear, the cyclical and evolutionary essence of this process is taken into account. According to Schön (1983), there is a “reflective conversation” between the designer/architect and the situation in which, to achieve a good result, the designer must act on the situation, then evaluate the response of the situation, and subsequently reflect and adjust the actions. In fact, both in the creation of the repository and in the subsequent application of strategies within the SARPe project, this iterative nature of the architectural design process is considered. The main characteristics of each of the three stages of the architectural design cycle in which the strategies were classified are:

Understanding Stage: Tools and methods for identification and inspiration characterised by uncovering users’ real needs, fostering empathy, exploring, inspiring, and reframing opportunities. A notable example of this stage is Counter-storytelling, which, as a situated method, challenges dominant narratives by offering alternative perspectives. Coming from marginalised communities, these narratives allow them to define their own identities and histories. This approach enhances design by incorporating diverse perspectives, enabling more inclusive, socially responsible solutions that address the needs of historically marginalised communities (Miller, 2020; Wagaman, 2018). This stage also includes other strategies such as Diffraction Drawing, Queering the Archive, Derive, or Reflective Journals, among others.

Ideation Stage: Methods and tools for prioritisation and analysis characterised by problem-solving, experimenting, engaging, reaffirming user needs, and rethinking solutions. A relevant method in this stage is Life Road Maps, where students visually represent the most significant events in their lives and reflect on the decisions that have shaped their identity. This promotes self-awareness and a deeper understanding of the physical and social environment in which they have developed (Aston et al., 2020; Facing History & Ourselves, 2008). Other examples of this stage include Situated and Critical Storytelling, the Livingston Design Method, Mind Maps, and SWOT Analysis.

Implementation Stage: Tools and methods for planning that aim to test solutions, review actions and strategies, evaluate models, and evolve proposals. One of the strategies of this stage is the Ladder of Participation, which emphasises the importance of genuine citizen engagement in architectural design for communities, equating participation with the redistribution of power. It highlights that without a true transfer of authority—such as decision-making power or resources—participation becomes superficial, benefiting only a select few. The “ladder” model helps identify power dynamics in the design process, revealing how existing systems often overlook marginalised voices (Arnstein, 1969; Organizing Engagement, 2019). There are more pedagogical tactics in this stage such as, Small Experiments or Simulations, Pop Up Infrastructures, Peer to Peer, and Socially Situated Live Projects, among others.

Analogue, Blended, and Digital Learning Environments

The XII Conference on Teaching Innovation in Architecture (JIDA 2025) whose central theme was “between the analogue and the digital,” expanded the scope and applicability of the studied strategies. The challenge laid in reflecting on the adaptability of socially situated methods and tools in the repository—originally entirely analogue—to blended or digital learning environments in architectural education. This not only fostered debate on the use of digital tools in teaching and their perceived disconnection from physical and social realities but also expanded the potential for implementing the repository’s methods and tools in environments beyond the analogue.

Consequently, each analysed method and tool was also classified based on the environments in which they can be implemented: exclusively analogue, blended, and either analogue or digital. The first category refers to strategies requiring physical application involving direct student interaction with the environment and its users. A connection that, among other things, enhances perception and learning by allowing a fuller deployment of the senses that characterise human beings. According to Higgins (2021), humans possess more than ten senses: vision, hearing, smell, taste, touch, colour perception, pleasure and pain (nociception), desire, balance (vestibular system), sense of time, direction (spatial orientation), and proprioception (body awareness).

Methods classified under blended environments are those that can be implemented in teaching exercises partially carried out virtually but require physical work either before or after the virtual component. Finally, analogue or digital strategies are those characterised by their flexibility, allowing them to be adapted and used interchangeably in either setting.

This analysis revealed that a significant number of socially situated methods and tools in the SARPe repository can be adapted to both blended and digital teaching environments (Table 3). In fact, methods such as Literature Review, Critical Mindset, and Life Stories have already been applied in virtual scenarios of the SARPe research project. These applications occurred during the preliminary stages of the Summer School 2023 in Pavia, Italy, titled “+2 Space + Common Good,” and the Summer School 2024, “Architectural Slow Cooking,” held in Istanbul, Turkey.

Furthermore, methods and tools that remain exclusively analogue and cannot yet be adapted to digital environments account for only 20% of the extracted strategies (Table 3).

Interestingly, 61% of these analogue strategies are implemented during the understanding stage of the design process. This stage requires students to explore their surroundings and empathise with the needs of the users for whom the proposed designs are intended.

Understanding	Ideation	Implementation
Participant Observation	Problem Tree Analysis	Small Experiments or Simulation
Mosaic Approach	Value Proposition Canvas	Ladder of Participation
Card Clustering or VIPP	Five Whys	Democracy Cube
Life Story	Life Road Maps	1:1 Scale Prototyping or Testing Prototype
Stakeholder Analysis	Design Games	Student Evaluation Survey
Community Mapping with Children	Storyboarding	Pop-up Infrastructure
Role Playing	Bruno Munari Method	Expert Panels
Personas	Speed Dating Design Method	Socially Situated Crit
Shadowing	SWOT Analysis	Socially Situated Live Projects
Research Storytelling	Phillips 66	Peer to Peer
Safaris	Sequential Embedded Experimental Method	Self Evaluation in Design Studios
Stakeholder Journey Mapping	Dilemma-Driven Design	Students Tutor
Counter-storytelling	Scenario Analysis	NAF (Novelty, Attractiveness, Feasibility study)
Semi-structured Interview	Empathy Mapping	Digital or Analogue Strategies
Affective and Emotional Mapping	Brainstorming	
Collaborative Mapping or Citizen Mapping	Biographical Method	
Dérive or the Dream-like Drift	System Mapping	Dig.Non-adaptable
Research Surveys	Quick Voting Tools: Dot Voting y Barometers	Dig.Adaptable
Oral History	Livingston Design Method	
Social Mapping	Design Charrettes	
The Participation Matrix	Brainwriting	
Collage in Research	Concept Mapping	
Transect Walk	World Café	
Sociogram	Planning Cells	
Timeline	How Might We?	

Reflective Journals	Flow Exercise	Digital or Analogue Strategies
Reading With	Stokes	
Photo Walk	Draw (how to make) Toast	
Fishbone Diagram or Ishikawa Diagram	Critical Thinking Mindset	
Bodystorming	Six Thinking Hats	Dig.Non-adaptable
Literature Review	SCAMPER	
Socially Situated Research-led Teaching	Affinity Diagram or KJ Method	
Assemblage Drawing	Synectics	Dig.Adaptable
Diffractive Drawing	Mind Maps	
Essayistic Filmmaking	Conceptual Framework	
Filmic Making	Storytelling	
Queering the Archive	Affordances	
Mapping in Design Studio	Situated and Critical Storytelling in Design	

Table 3. Classification of strategies by learning environments.

Unlike the understanding stage, current experiences suggest that the implementation stage offers limited opportunities to adapt its tools to exclusively virtual environments. However, blended teaching environments—where physical interaction and real-world evaluation of proposals are possible—enable broader application of most strategies. Finally, methods and tools categorised under the ideation stage are the most easily adaptable to blended, fully virtual, or digital settings. In summary, the repository's strategies are distributed as follows: blended strategies account for 22.5%, analogue-only strategies represent 20%, and fully flexible or adaptable strategies comprise 57.5%.

Although a significant portion of the methods and tools identified in the repository originated in the analogue world—developed within various disciplines during periods predating the digital era—it is noteworthy how many of these can be seamlessly extrapolated to virtual environments. Only twelve, representing approximately 20% of the total, are currently non-adaptable to digital contexts due to the limitations of existing tools. Nevertheless, the repository provides a wide range of options for maintaining a connection with the site and its stakeholders, even when employing a virtual teaching model.

Conclusions

The construction of the repository of socially situated tools and methods in architecture represents a comprehensive approach to enhancing architectural education by embedding it within real-world social contexts. This repository is meticulously organised to facilitate the comparison, analysis, and application of various pedagogical strategies, which are classified based on their relevance to different stages of the design process, pedagogical categories, and preferred learning environments—analogue, blended, or digital.

The structure of the repository allows educators to choose strategies that align with specific teaching methodologies, such as cooperative learning, experiential learning, and transformative experiences. By doing so, it highlights the diverse pedagogical methods available for actively engaging students in addressing societal needs and fostering social inclusion. The additional organisation according to the stages of the design process provides an alternative approach for educators to effectively integrate these methods into the architectural design cycle. Furthermore, the repository is adaptable to different learning environments, whether analogue, blended, or digital. Although many strategies were initially developed for analogue contexts, a significant number can be also used in blended or digital environments. This adaptability ensures the repository's relevance across various educational settings and is crucial for maintaining a connection with the site and its stakeholders, even within virtual teaching models.

In conclusion, the repository advocates for a reconnection between architectural education and the context in which the profession is practiced. This bond is essential for addressing the educational gap regarding architects' political and social responsibilities. By implementing these socially situated strategies, the aim is to encourage students to engage in activities that address societal needs, promote social inclusion, and work towards reducing inequalities.

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All entries by Ingrid Vargas Díaz, except:

Affordances by Linda Migliavacca

Assemblage Drawing, by Oyku Simsek

Diffraction Drawing by Elif Nur Adıgüzel

Essayistic Filmmaking by Büşra Balaban

Filmic Mapping by Büşra Balaban

Mapping in Design Studio by Aslıhan Şenel

Peer to Peer by Maddalena Duse

Queering the Archive by Buse Özçelik

Self Evaluation by Linda Migliavacca

Situated and Critical Storytelling in Design Studio by
Aslıhan Şenel

Socially Situated Crit by Ioanni Delsante

Socially Situated Live Projects by Ioanni Delsante

Socially Situated Research Led Teaching by Ioanni
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Students Tutor by Linda Migliavacca

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Vargas-Díaz

International Summer School, Brescia 2023

REPOSITORY OF TOOLS AND METHODS



International Summer School, Malaga 2025

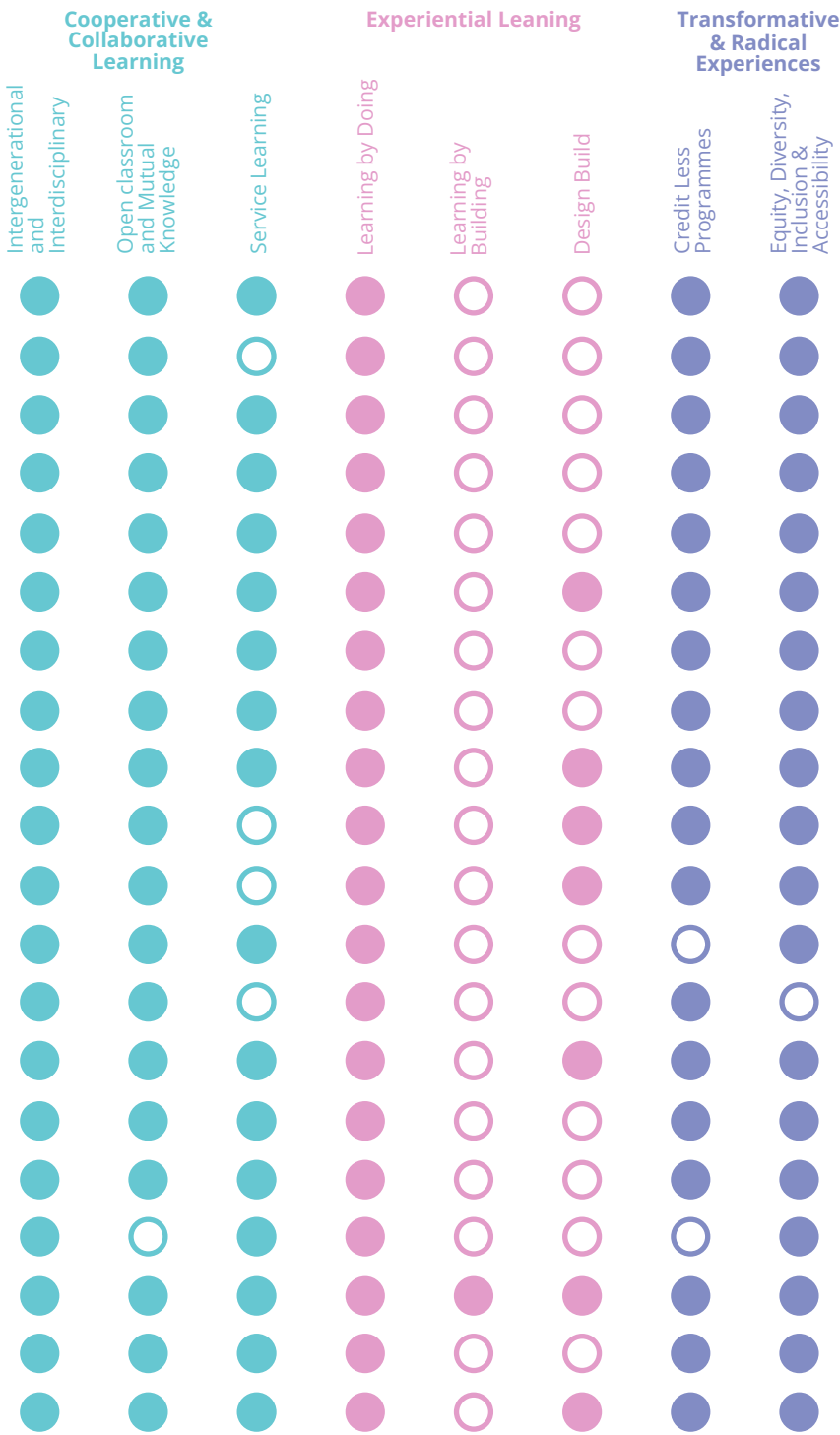
UNDERSTANDING STAGE

Identification and Inspiration

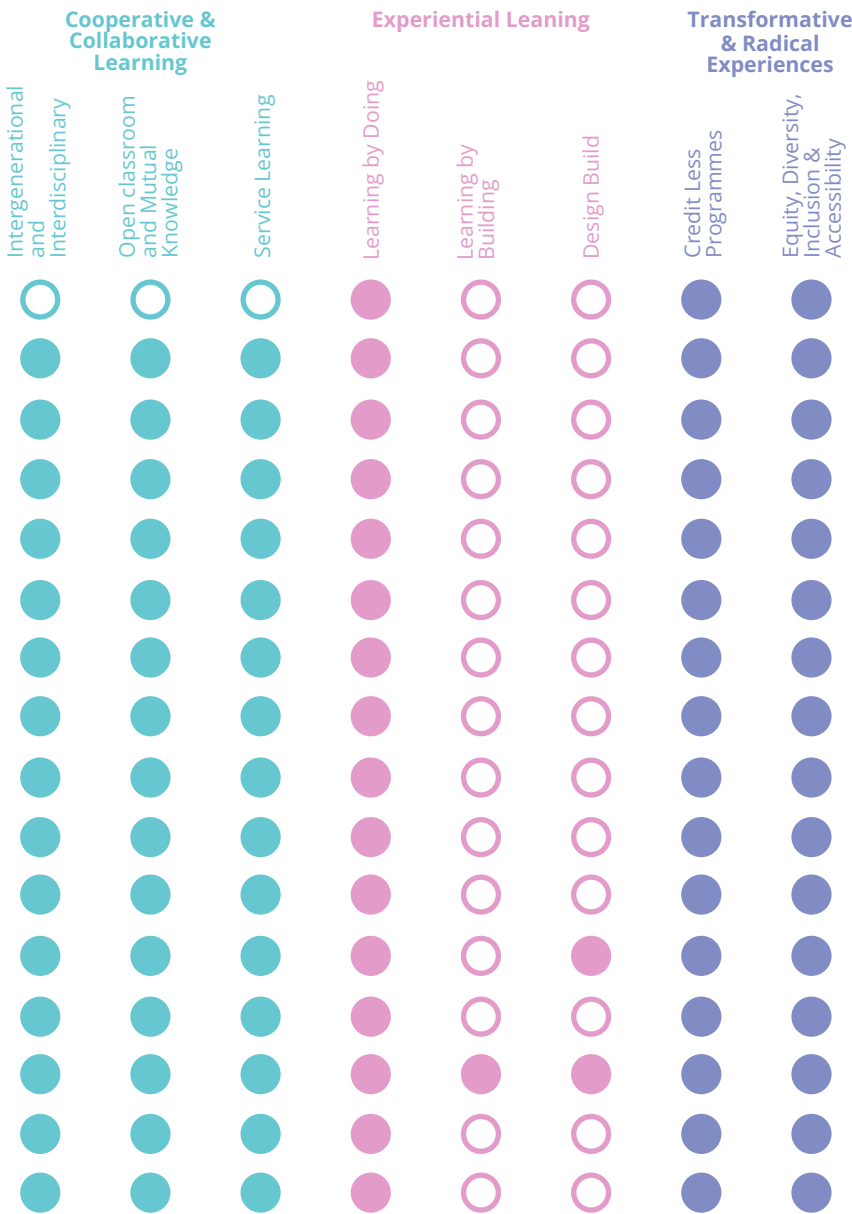
Discover User Deep Needs
Reframe Opportunity
Empathise
Explore
Inspire

INDEX BY CATEGORIES AND SUBCATEGORIES

Affective and Emotional Mapping	26
Assemblage Drawing	28
Bodystorming	30
Collage in Research	32
Collaborative Mapping or Citizen Mapping	34
Community Mapping with Children	36
Counter-storytelling	38
Dérive or the Dream-like Drift	40
Diffraction Drawing	42
Essayistic Filmmaking	44
Filmic Mapping	46
Life Story	48
Literature Review	50
Mapping in Design Studio	52
Mosaic Approach	54
Oral History	56
Participant Observation	58
Participation Matrix or Stakeholder Participation Planning	60
Personas	62
Queering the Archive	64



Reading With	66
Reflective Journals	68
Research Storytelling	70
Research Surveys	72
Role Playing	74
Safaris	76
Semi-structured Interview	78
Shadowing	80
Social Mapping	82
Socially Situated Research-Led Teaching	84
Sociogram	86
Stakeholder Analysis	88
Stakeholder Journey Mapping	90
Timeline	92
Transect Walk	94
VIPP - Visualization in Participatory Programs or Card Clustering	96



Affective and Emotional Mapping



WHAT?

Affective Mapping serves as a visual tool enabling participants, including architecture learners, educators, researchers, and community residents, to express their emotional responses as they walk through a neighbourhood or urban area. When studying urban or architectural spaces, designers commonly document information and impressions, recording various aspects such as materials, colours, sounds, and smells. Affective and Emotional Mapping deepens learners' understanding of how spatial environments impact diverse community members emotionally and socially. Now, an emotional dimension can be incorporated through Emotional Mapping, where participants map their feelings as they walk. This tool can be utilised individually or as part of a guided group exploration.

WHY?

This tool provides insights into the community's emotional experiences, offering valuable qualitative data about the vibrant and safe areas within the neighbourhood and highlighting spots that might need improvement. By incorporating emotions into citizen participation in urban planning, public managers can enhance their comprehension of the connection between the inhabitants and urban spaces. Additionally, it serves as a tool for exploring meaningful designs by studying phenomena that become visible only through representation, not direct experience. Students learn to map emotional states of individuals or groups, which can both support and challenge conventional architectural assumptions, leading to unexpected insights about a place or validating intuitive understandings of spatial behaviour.

WITH WHOM?

The activity is initiated by researchers and educators, involving learners alongside community residents.

HOW?

Before conducting a session, it is crucial to consider that different individuals may experience varying emotions due to factors such as age, gender, mobility, or past experiences. While technology like EEG and GPS can be used to create emotional maps by recording the movement and affective states of pedestrians, a limited budget can still facilitate this process using simple materials like coloured dot stickers, emoji stickers, and a map. This accessible approach empowers learners and community members to actively participate in Emotional Mapping, encouraging inclusivity and diverse perspectives in spatial understanding. Follow these steps: First, provide each participant with their neighbourhood base map clearly marked with nodes, along with stickers or emoji stickers. Second, walk together between the nodes and facilitate a brief discussion about participants' emotional responses to their surroundings. This guided exploration fosters critical reflection among learners on how architectural spaces influence feelings and social experiences. Third, invite participants to place a sticker on the map at the node that best represents their feelings, accompanied by 1-2 words describing their emotion at that location. Participants can also colour the route between nodes on the map to record their feelings during transit. Fourth, compile the data by averaging out the ratings for each node to identify the most positively and negatively rated nodes. Finally, transfer the compiled ratings onto a map of the nodes to visually present your findings.

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Assemblage Drawing



WHAT?

Assemblage Drawing produces situated knowledges through the complex relationships of the drawing person, drawing tool, and the context of the environment in which the drawing takes place. It is a tool for unpacking the relationships that the drawer or the drawn object is engaged in. By doing that, it aims to probe the position of the drawer or the researcher in relation to the researched subject as well as the conventional knowledge production processes. Assemblage Drawing produces partial, dynamic and subjective knowledges of a place. Assemblage drawing is rooted on the idea of assemblage thinking which emerges as a transformative practice requiring one to acknowledge their position in the complexity of other human and nonhuman actors. In different fields including anthropology, ecology, and political science, researchers dealing with the specifics of a place and the relationships between that place and organisms, developed the idea of assemblage thinking. Drawing from Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, assemblages are theorised as open-ended gatherings or heterogeneous multiplicities made up of both matter and intensities. As it probes the agency of the drawing person or the researcher, it transforms the conventional methods of knowledge production as well as the drawing person herself. Assemblage Drawing requires perpetual visits to a site to draw it repetitively for certain periods of time. It starts by drawing an object or cluster of objects and continues with drawing other objects related to the previous ones as their relations are unveiled through the research. In architectural pedagogy and practice, Assemblage Drawing encourages learners to explore the socio-spatial relationships of built environments, understand how people and materials interact within a space, and reflect critically on their positionality as designers within these complex assemblages. By doing that, Assemblage Drawing also challenges conventional space-time continuity.

WHY?

Assemblage Drawings in architectural design education probe the conventional architectural drawings (i.e., plan, section, perspective) for their single static viewpoints and underlines the possibility of multiple points of views. Assemblage Drawings reveal contradictions inherent to a place. As Assemblage Drawings can be deemed as fieldwork, they require the researcher step out from the institutional confines. Assemblage Drawings, like assemblages, are re-produced continuously. They reveal the position of the researcher as including her through temporal and spatial clues as well as changing drawing planes. It exceeds the scale of the paper or place and contributes to the topological understanding of space. In the architectural design studio, Assemblage Drawings may help the learners try to understand a place with its multiplicities and contradictions. These drawings may be employed as part of an analysis for a dynamic approach to architectural site and design for an understanding of architecture as part of dynamic processes happening at a site.

WITH WHOM?

Educators and researchers guide the process, connecting learners with experts.

HOW?

To implement Assemblage Drawing in architectural pedagogy, begin by identifying the architectural object or space to explore. Rather than representing it as a fixed entity, focus on the complex assemblages it participates in, including human actors, objects, and environmental factors. The drawing process follows these assemblages over time, capturing dynamic relationships and temporalities rather than producing a static image. Encourage participants to draw at multiple scales simultaneously, showing connections between proximate and distant locations, and highlighting interactions across different contexts. Assemblage Drawings are open-ended, allowing contributions from multiple individuals throughout the process, which ensures that the drawing evolves collaboratively and remains flexible. The method foregrounds everyday knowledge by incorporating activities, encounters, and ways of life that shape and are shaped by the built environment. This approach makes the drawing accessible to both academic participants and external collaborators, creating a platform for shared understanding of the spatial, social, and temporal dimensions of architectural practice. Assemblage Drawing sessions can be structured in iterative stages. Participants first observe and document individual interactions with the space, then map relational dynamics over time, and finally synthesise multiple contributions into a collectively evolving representation. This iterative approach reinforces the pedagogical aim of situating architectural understanding within lived, socially embedded experiences, encouraging critical reflection on the roles and agencies of all actors involved.

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Bodystorming



WHAT?

Bodystorming involves physically exploring and discovering ideas, swiftly uncovering assumptions and issues. This method, akin to brainstorming, prioritises generating ideas and unexpected insights through hands-on exploration, experiences, and interactions. In design studios and architectural projects, Bodystorming allows learners and practitioners to enact spatial scenarios, test circulation patterns, and experience environments from the user's perspective, fostering empathy and revealing design opportunities that may be overlooked through discussion alone. It proves particularly valuable when the ideation challenge involves physical or interpersonal elements, when verbal discussions become tiresome for the group, or when a session requires empathy, energy, or a memorable focal point.

WHY?

Supporters of this concept highlight the advantage of physical engagement, emphasising the act of getting up and trying things out firsthand instead of merely discussing them around a table and relying on abstract imagination. It stands as a genuine user-centred design approach accessible to both designers and users. Its objective extends beyond formulating more effective experience ideas within their usage context; it also seeks to foster a tangible understanding of the complexities and actions inherent in human activity within potential future scenarios. This generative, hands-on form of participant observation establishes the conditions for collaboratively addressing problems, making sense of situations, and reshaping them by executing actions in simulated settings and real-time occasions. For architecture learners, Bodystorming provides an embodied way of exploring spatial experiences and user interactions, helping them to critically assess how design choices affect everyday practices.

WITH WHOM?

Educators and researchers lead the initiative, engaging learners alongside community residents, service clubs, and social collectives, with support from NGOs, government, donor organisations, and private and public institutions.

HOW?

To carry out a Bodystorming session, follow these steps. Firstly, assess your starting point for ideation and strategise how to incorporate prior knowledge into the session. Secondly, assemble the appropriate individuals to collaborate with your core team during the exercise. Thirdly, immerse the group in the challenge's context, especially if they are unfamiliar with it. Conduct a brief visit to the location during operational hours, observe without a specific agenda, and potentially engage in informal interviews, sketches, or photography to capture the physical environment. Fourthly, utilise a workshop space and set up any necessary props or environmental elements, or conduct the bodystorming directly in the original context. Fifthly, create a list of intriguing situations or ideas based on the insights gained from the immersion. Sixthly, take each situation one at a time and engage in role-playing to explore and test ideas. Roles can be predetermined or assigned by the group. As alternative ideas emerge, experiment with them or set them aside for later consideration. Seventhly, document the group's findings on a flipchart to aid in remembering discoveries. Eighthly, repeat the process for other situations or ideas. Ninthly, reflect on the discoveries made and decide which ideas to pursue further, potentially employing an idea selection method. By embodying users and simulating their actions within a space, participants can reveal friction points, opportunities, and overlooked dynamics that static drawings or digital models often fail to capture.

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Collage in Research



WHAT?

The term “collage” originates from the French word “coller,” meaning to stick, and involves the cutting and adhering of objects onto a flat surface. The user-friendly and adaptable nature of collage has established it as a valuable artistic medium in qualitative research. Collage creation exercises can be structured around a broad range of topics or subjects. Regardless of the chosen theme, crafting a collage is a reflective practice wherein the creator shapes the narrative, determines how materials are represented, and constructs the overall artwork. This reflective aspect is particularly heightened when the subject is the artist’s own life or experiences. In architectural pedagogy and research, various types of Collage, such as Metaphorical Collage, Biographical Collage, or Eidetic/photomontage, prove highly beneficial. In participatory design research, this tool serves to facilitate collaborative research with communities, elevating participant voices to those of co-researchers and co-generators of knowledge. By encouraging multiple perspectives, Collage in Research supports inclusive and decolonizing practices in architectural education and community engagement. Consequently, like other arts-based research approaches, collage can provide a space for decolonization.

WHY?

It proves beneficial in gaining insights into the perspectives and values of the individuals you’re designing for or researching. Collages offer a straightforward, low-fidelity method to prompt people to create something tangible and then articulate its significance to them. This approach extends beyond individual understanding and has found application in community and relationship development. Collages contribute to fostering collaborative partnerships, promoting co-learning, and building capacity among partners, striking a balance between knowledge generation and intervention. Collage encourages learners and community members to explore and communicate their spatial experiences and cultural identities visually, making abstract ideas more accessible and relatable. This tool facilitates interactive interviews, encouraging participants to engage in self-reflection, organise their thoughts, and express themselves verbally. The process establishes a reflective framework, allowing participants, as co-researchers, to contemplate their experiences and evaluate their significance. Through the medium of collage, participants construct rich and vivid stories that highlight their self-identity. Finally, Collages prove well-suited for research involving vulnerable populations, particularly in cross-cultural contexts and when addressing sensitive issues.

WITH WHOM?

The activity is initiated by educators and researchers, involving learners alongside community residents, with the support of experts.

HOW?

The Collage process encompasses four distinct stages: “preparation,” “collage making workshops,” “in-depth interviews,” and the “reporting stage.” In the “preparation” stage, a workshop plan is developed and tested with two or three participants. Solicit feedback and implement necessary changes. Moving on to the second stage, “collage making workshops,” create a comfortable environment, provide refreshments, and introduce the project. Explain the consent process for collage creation and potential future interviews. Showcase piloted collages as examples, and supply participants with white poster boards, paper, markers, and various art supplies. Instruct them to document significant life moments and envision a future milestone. Participants can write, draw, or embellish their collages as desired. The creation process typically takes around 30 minutes, during which facilitators observe group dynamics, interactions, and discussion themes. Participants can share their milestone choices, artistic decisions, and personal journeys. The third stage, “in-depth interviews,” begins with an explanation of the research project and obtaining interview-specific consent. Interviews, lasting 20 minutes to one hour, adopt a reflective questioning style inspired by motivational interviewing. Participants are acknowledged as partners, their perspectives valued, and their ideas welcomed. Open-ended questions are used to broaden topics and gain insights. The Collage serves as a tool to elicit discussion points and forms the basis for a reflective exercise. This process supports learners and communities in visually expressing their spatial experiences and social realities, deepening engagement with the built environment. Finally, in the “reporting and future steps” stage, measures are taken to ensure the anonymity and confidentiality of recorded data, especially for interviews. De-identified facilitator notes, observation records, and reflective journals are analysed to produce a report.

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Collaborative Mapping or Citizen Mapping



WHAT?

Collaborative Mapping, also known as Citizen Mapping, is a method of collecting data that combines web mapping and user-generated content from a group of individuals or entities. It falls under the broader concept of crowdsourcing, where citizens actively participate in achieving a shared objective. In Collaborative Mapping, the goals typically have a geographical focus, such as actively contributing to urban planning efforts. It becomes a pedagogical tool, allowing learners to engage directly with local communities and co-produce spatial knowledge. This approach becomes valuable when data, information, and knowledge are scattered among the population, and there is no centralised data source. Collaborative Mapping supports inclusive design processes in architectural learning by amplifying the voices of those who inhabit the spaces being studied. Collaborative Mapping can provide significant benefits to citizens and community activities, especially when integrated into an e-Planning platform. The extension of critical and participatory GIS approaches combines software tools with collective activities, enabling communities to work together to achieve common goals.

WHY?

Employing collaborative tools in architectural education fosters learners' interaction, enabling them to achieve outcomes together that would be challenging individually. It also develops interoperable services that seamlessly integrate urban information, allowing it to be efficiently utilised across diverse platforms. Collaborative Mapping goes beyond mobile applications; although, utilising mobile devices with GPS can enhance the accuracy of geolocation data. Open-source tools are instrumental in gathering data about healthcare facilities and humanitarian efforts. Moreover, these tools play a vital role in creating digital maps that focus on enhancing accessibility for individuals with disabilities, promoting greater mobility within cities and local communities. In socially situated architectural pedagogies, such tools become more than technical instruments—they serve as frameworks for empowering local knowledge and expanding learners' spatial literacy through civic engagement.

WITH WHOM?

The activity is initiated by researchers and educators, involving learners alongside community residents, with the support of experts.

HOW?

Implement the following steps through a series of sessions: First, introduce Collaborative Mapping through a theoretical session highlighting the opportunities presented by collaborative mapping projects and the application of OpenStreetMap (OSM) in urban planning tasks, such as addressing accessibility issues. Frame this session within a pedagogical context that emphasises community-engaged learning and the architect's role as a social agent. Second, conduct informal meetings and fieldwork in a format blending education and recreation in public spaces with volunteers. During one session, outline the mapping activity's objectives (e.g., raising awareness about mobility challenges faced by people with disabilities) and invite field experts. Encourage architecture learners to collaborate directly with residents, fostering mutual learning and situated knowledge-building. Present the methodology for data collection during the subsequent fieldwork, explaining key elements and data collection procedures. In a second session, conduct the fieldwork by dividing participants into mixed teams (community residents, experts, learners, etc.) and assigning specific areas in the city or neighbourhood. Teams should document observations in notebooks and add information to printed maps related to the study issue. Third, guide participants in entering data into OSM through a theoretical-practical session, demonstrating how to systematise, standardise, and transfer field data (originally recorded on paper) to OSM. Finally, in another theoretical-practical session, create a map displaying the results by extracting OSM data using QGIS and analyse the findings collaboratively.

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Community Mapping with Children



WHAT?

This strategic planning tool is designed to help children identify risks and resources in their community, encouraging meaningful conversations about their environment. The final outcome is a drawing or map that clearly shows the current state of the community. This is enriched with images added to the original map, showing the changes that children and young people hope to see. The tool can also highlight the positive elements, or “assets,” that children notice in their community. This tool supports learners in learning how to involve young community members in the design process, promoting a sense of participation and belonging. It also helps them appreciate the importance of listening to community insights when designing spaces that truly respond to people’s needs.

WHY?

The goal is to create a visual narrative depicting what matters to children in their community. This narrative serves as a foundation for discussing ongoing efforts, potential actions, and future initiatives aimed at enhancing child well-being in their community. This approach teaches learners to value the perspectives of all community members, especially children, whose needs are often overlooked. It also encourages them to design spaces that support well-being and foster a sense of belonging from an early age.

WITH WHOM?

Educators and researchers collaborate to engage learners and children in shared educational activities.

HOW?

Materials like chalk, large sheets of paper, tape, pencils, pens, clay, cardboard, art/craft supplies, and more are required. The process involves two main stages: creating the present-day map and drawing the future images. For the first part, follow these steps: first, invite children to draw a map of their community. Second, explain that they should depict the locations and elements significant to their lives and families, places they enjoy spending time, places that cause concern, and crucial spots for vulnerable children. Third, take a photo of the map for documentation or display it in a visible community area. Fourth, pose facilitation questions to prompt discussions and record their responses. The second part, focusing on drawing future images, consists of five steps: first, inquire, “what changes would you like to see in your community to make it better?” and “what plans are there or already in progress to improve the community?” Second, ask children to draw these changes on small cards and attach them to relevant spots on the map. Encourage them to think about changes that would benefit the most vulnerable children. Third, capture a photo of the updated map for documentation or public display. Fourth, ask questions like, “why are these changes important to you?” or “how would these changes enhance your life?” and document their responses.

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Counter-storytelling



WHAT?

Counter-storytelling serves as a powerful tool that challenges and reframes the dominant narrative by emphasising different aspects of the story, offering alternative perspectives, and dispelling misconceptions or partial truths present in the master narrative. More than just storytelling, it is a deliberate act of reclaiming voice and agency, especially within educational and community settings that prioritise equity and inclusion. The concept of counter narrative encompasses how marginalised communities utilise stories to establish their unique understanding of themselves and their history, diverging from conventional historical accounts. This method highlights how narratives can perpetuate oppression among marginalised populations. By foregrounding counterstories, educators and designers create spaces for critical dialogue, empathy, and transformative learning that confront systemic power imbalances.

WHY?

Embracing counternarratives encourages a more humane approach to understanding users. When approaching users, designers should consider them as protagonists in their own stories—exploring their identities, circumstances, desires, and the challenges they face. This mindset shifts design from a top-down process to a dialogic practice that values lived experience and multiple truths. This perspective is crucial in the realm of design, where Counterstorytelling plays a significant role in fostering empathy and creating impactful designs. By incorporating these diverse narratives, designers can develop more inclusive and socially responsible solutions that better address the needs and experiences of all communities, particularly those who have been historically marginalised. Counterstorytelling transforms design into a tool for social justice, helping to dismantle systemic inequities and build more equitable futures.

WITH WHOM?

The activity is led by educators and researchers, involving learners in collaboration with community residents, social collectives, and service clubs, and supported by donor organisations and private and public institutions.

HOW?

There are two approaches to employing counter-narrative as a research method: (1) gathering narratives from research participants perceived as counter to mainstream narratives, whether conceptualised by the participants, researchers, or both, and (2) collecting diverse data from participants to construct a counter-narrative. Counterstories can assume various generic styles such as chronicles, narratives, allegories, parables, and dialogues, typically falling within the autobiographical, biographical, or composite genres. Interviews, field observations and review of written material, among other methods, are essential. After collecting data, researchers create composite characters to convey the counter-narrative. Although based on the voices of participants, like other forms of counter-narrative, the resulting narrative brings these voices into dialogue with the researchers' knowledge and experiences, including their own encounters as/with members of marginalised communities. Despite the use of literary techniques and devices, the result is not intended to be perceived as "fiction." The composite characters, as well as focusing on shared issues rather than individual details, also serve to safeguard the participants' privacy and, consequently, their safety.

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Dérive or the Dream-like Drift



WHAT?

A Dérive, or “drift” in English, refers to a spontaneous journey through an urban landscape, where participants abandon their usual routines and allow themselves to be guided by the attractions of the surroundings and the encounters they come across. It entails wandering through a city without a predetermined route or plan, encouraging individuals to be captivated by the city’s geometry and the features of urban spaces without allowing preconceived ideas or past experiences to influence their perception. There is no specific purpose or end goal; it is simply about experiencing the city as it is. Dérives involve playful and constructive behaviour, along with an awareness of psychogeographical effects, making them distinctly different from traditional notions of a journey or a leisurely stroll. When integrated into architectural education, the Dérive becomes a tool for socially situated learning—encouraging learners to uncover spatial injustices, hidden narratives, and affective relationships between people and place.

WHY?

By refraining from relying on a map created by others and avoiding adherence to predefined guidelines, a unique perception of the city can be cultivated. This approach enables the recognition of situations and scenarios within the city that might otherwise remain unnoticed, as they are not officially documented in standard cartography. Consequently, it fosters a deeper understanding of urban complexity. Debord’s concept of psychogeography and the practice of dérive, or drift, aimed to foster spontaneous encounters and thought-provoking interactions with fellow individuals. A prominent aspect of situationist counter-urbanist practice is the evident tension between its playful, “ludic” dimension and its observational, quasi-scientific nature. Dérives, as per situationist theory, are deemed necessary due to the increasingly predictable and monotonous nature of everyday life in advanced capitalist societies. By encouraging architecture learners to engage with urban spaces through drifting, educators promote reflective practices that are attentive to cultural, social, and political dimensions of space.

WITH WHOM?

Educators and researchers lead the initiative, engaging learners alongside community residents, social collectives, and service clubs, with support from NGOs, donor organisations, and private and public institutions.

HOW?

Before you begin, make a conscious effort to clear your mind and encourage participants to do the same, letting go of any preconceived thoughts or judgments about the city. Provide instructions, such as being open to perceiving things as they are, not as you remember them, allowing the surroundings to absorb you, and leaving all expectations at the door. During a Dérive, participants should allow themselves to be captivated by the attractions of the terrain and the encounters they come across. While chance plays a role, the concept of Dérive is less reliant on it due to the fixed points and focal areas in cities that discourage entry or exit from certain zones. This approach conveys a sense of scientific exploration or even military strategy. These walks become pedagogical spaces for interrogating power relations embedded in the urban fabric. Finally, document the places that draw you in and those that repel you. Reflect on the reasons behind these emotions and behaviours. Consider how the architecture, topography, and spatial elements influence your experience. Reflect on how these factors relate to aspects such as class, gender, race, ability, and other markers of identity. Use this critical reflection to inform architectural thinking that is responsive to the lived realities of diverse communities. Envision ways to enhance your experience of the route you walked.

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Diffraction Drawing



WHAT?

Diffraction Drawing is a feminist and situated pedagogical tool that explores a diffractive method in the architectural design studio. Diffraction is often used in social sciences and humanities as a feminist method for challenging singular, institutionalised, and normalised knowledge produced from “nowhere.” Diffraction is a way to question the singular and absolute knowledge while revealing alternative ways of thinking. Diffractive method was developed by feminist physicist and theorist Karen Barad. According to her, through a method of diffraction, a researcher traces the spatial, temporal, and material interrelationships. Method of diffraction involves bifurcations within overlapping relationships, echoing the form of diffraction in optics. Diffraction patterns disrupt binaries while they occur, as such provides a non-exclusionary metaphor for approaching differences in sociology and humanities. Diffraction suggests that the past, present, and future are co-constitutive, influencing each other in ways that challenge our conventional understanding of temporality. This entanglement of time both reconfigures our understanding of the world and also creates ethical responsibilities towards unrealised futures and pasts that were never fully experienced. Diffractive thinking calls for a more inclusive and equitable knowledge production and recognition of our responsibilities to reveal those excluded, marginalised, and suppressed knowledges. Diffraction Drawing, in the context of architectural design, diffracts conventional architectural drawing techniques to reveal and challenge hierarchies. It is a tool that allows designers to question and disrupt traditional design practices, consider the ethical implications of their work, and engage in continuous diffraction through their research.

WHY?

In architecture, Diffraction Drawing can be used when researching a site, as it may reveal how a site is entangled with political and economic relations, people, the soil as a material entity, the climatic conditions, etc. Diffraction Drawing may be regarded as a careful practice that traces more-than-human entanglements at a site, queering both material and discursive aspects and revealing these entanglements in multiple situated ways to tell untold stories that turn a site into a place as a world of more-than-human. It seeks different ways to represent these untold stories by diffracting conventional drawing and design. Diffraction Drawing challenges the obsessions of singularity, permanence, and fixity in conventional architectural design by extending the inquiries in the design studio with ethical concerns. It also encourages learners to think about architecture's relationship with a more-than-human world, from its construction to its use and eventual destruction, rather than merely considering ethics in a human-centred way through the building's use. Diffraction Drawing in situated pedagogies in architectural design studios approaches architectural design as a field of research instead of a representation of reality. As such, it involves questioning and researching the act of drawing and, thus, the site and context in which a design is situated. Diffraction Drawing challenges conventional drawings and designs by producing multiple-unfinished-open architectural representations of suppressed stories through the researcher's situated knowledge.

WITH WHOM?

Educators and researchers guide the process, connecting learners with experts.

HOW?

Diffractive Drawing begins by situating the designer within a site, allowing direct engagement with its physical, social, and temporal conditions. The process encourages the designer to move beyond conventional representations, focusing on relationships, multiple scales, and temporal layers rather than solely on objects or measurements. Designers may distort orthographic projections, break line hierarchies, and superimpose different temporalities to reveal hidden narratives and everyday practices at the site. The creation of multi-layered drawings enables designers to incorporate not only spatial coordinates and topography but also intangible aspects such as human activity, site memory, and meaning. Designers can actively shift scales throughout the drawing, zooming in or out to explore unconventional relationships, and fragment the view to reflect partial, situated knowledge rather than claiming holistic representation. Incorporating the designer's own presence—through notes, sketches, or physical traces—foregrounds situated and embodied knowledge, reinforcing the connection between observation, experience, and representation. The implementation can be structured in iterative stages: first, prolonged observation at the site to gather fragmented stories and multiple points of view; second, experimental drawing exercises that distort, layer, and juxtapose these observations; third, reflective discussions with peers or community participants to interrogate the subjectivities embedded in the drawings. This iterative practice not only produces complex, layered drawings but also transforms the designer's understanding of the site, revealing multiple subjectivities and fostering a socially situated approach to design research.

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Essayistic Filmmaking



WHAT?

The literary essay form posits in between reality and fiction which may be regarded as a critical and creative mode of recording daily experiences. The essay film takes on this critical position and offers a situated practice, unbounded from the conventions of traditional cinematic genres by its main features such as multiplicity, subjectivity and reflexivity. The practice of essayistic filmmaking may enable the production of situated knowledge by involving the perspectives of multiple; filming sites and subjects with their different relations, revealing the presence of filmmakers, inviting viewers to be involved with the film in various ways, and blending multiple subjective narratives within the film. Literature and cinema, utilise essay form because it reveals the author's position and dynamic relationships with the researched subject. In architecture, essayistic film provides a critical and creative tool for spatial research by enabling a fragmented, partial and multiple understanding of a site, and by revealing the site's entangled relationship with the author. As a situated tool, Essayistic Filmmaking might propose a practice within the framework of feminist care ethics, one that takes responsibility and can be held accountable. By including the topics that dominant knowledge ideologically and systematically ignores, the Essayistic Filmmaking offers critical approaches to them with a certain sense of responsibility. A situated practice of filmmaking might be a pedagogical tool to enable the author to take a social, ethical and caring position for understanding, discussing or producing a site.

WHY?

Essayistic Filmmaking provides an interdisciplinary research tool within the field of architecture, due to the features of the essay form as openness to translation across mediums and the particular characteristics of time-based media. In architectural education, Essayistic Filmmaking offers ways to recognise the personal connection with a site and questions the traditional norms of dominant knowledge about a place. It may project a particular personal experience of the researcher, filmmaker, and overlooked subject regarding a broader social concern. The subjective and reflective features do not merely emphasise the personal; filmmaking practice also serves as a tool for collective knowledge production in the design studio. It may become a means of communicating with the "other," functioning to reveal the familiar, the common, and the shared while fostering a more caring environment. By adopting a critical perspective, it offers situated knowledge from the site itself. The site is not merely an object of study but an active agent in the research process. Through these dynamic relationships, it may be regarded as challenging the hierarchies within the research process. This tool may be employed not only to critique, understand, or reinterpret an existing situation but also to imagine alternatives or create some speculative realities. In situated and critical research through a practice of Essayistic Filmmaking, the process is the focus rather than the final product. It suggests performative knowledge of a site, rather than a mere fixed representation, becoming a critical tool for understanding the site with its lived experience and variable agents.

WITH WHOM?

Educators and researchers guide the process, connecting learners with community residents, social collectives, and experts.

HOW?

Essayistic Filmmaking in architecture begins by situating the learner within a specific site, community, or social context. The process encourages the use of multiple media, integrating cinematic tools with architectural representation methods such as drawing, mapping, model-making, and collaging. Learners should engage collaboratively with the site and its agents—residents, stakeholders, social collectives, or even non-human participants—to co-produce knowledge and narratives. Educators facilitate this collaboration, guiding learners in ethical filming practices, inclusive representation, and collective interpretation of the site. The central feature of the essayistic approach is textuality, achieved by combining images and text—through voice-over, written text, or subtitles—to articulate the learner's perspective, experiences, and ethical position. Textual interventions do not simply describe the visual content but create new layers of meaning that situate the learner within the narrative of the site. The filmmaking process begins with observation and engagement, allowing learners to explore relationships between the site, its inhabitants, and environmental, social, or cultural factors. Learners can experiment with different narrative structures, montages, and editing techniques to highlight multiple viewpoints, temporalities, or overlooked phenomena. The process includes stages of recording, editing, and reflective discussion, emphasising awareness of social, cultural, and environmental contexts and fostering responsibility for how stories and communities are represented. The work is iterative, inviting reflection on both the visual and textual content, including ethical considerations, representation of participants, and potential biases.

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Filmic Mapping



WHAT?

Filmic Mapping offers a critical reproduction of a place through the embodied experience of film-viewing practice. As architecture and art critic Giuliana Bruno points out, a film viewer and a site visitor share similar experiences. By creating frames, the film transforms the viewer into a moving observer, mapping haptic space through embodied encounters rather than a disembodied, fixed gaze, turning “sight-seeing” into “site-seeing” with various bodily engagements. The viewer becomes a *voyageur/voyageuse* rather than a “voyeur.” A bodily encounter between the film and the viewer suggests a site for re-writings and re-readings. In architecture and design disciplines, space is often addressed solely by its function, whereas film represents it through the lived experience and the spatial ambiguities created by cinematographic techniques. By reinterpreting these filmic representations, critical and creative mapping performs a site not as a fixed entity but as a continuously changing state through the relationships formed among the imagined, remembered, and lived spaces of a subject. The physical materiality of encountered space, its filmic representation, and the cinematographic methods and tactics producing it juxtapose over a filmic mapping. This embodied film-viewing practice enables the map-maker to reveal their positions by addressing their situated, limited, and multiple knowledges of a filmic site. Both the film viewer’s (map-maker) and filmmaker’s approaches become readable on the map, allowing the map-viewer to see different spatial relationships by multiplying the perspective offered in the film. As a knowledge production tool within a situated pedagogy, architectural design learners can use Filmic Mapping to closely examine neglected issues, creating layered representations and fostering subjective and collective connections through reproductions.

WHY?

Filmic Mapping suggests an interdisciplinary research method within the field of architecture, cinema and visual arts. In architecture and urban design education, Filmic Mapping may reconfigure the structures and material practices through which spaces are produced, experienced and reproduced. Architectural representation and even an architectural design transform into drawings made with the many different bodies that make space, inclusive of race, class, gender, dis/ability, human and more than human material matters. Mapping requires a critical understanding of a site/subject/issue through its historical, social, political and cultural contexts. Unconventional understanding of a particular spatial issue evidently requires another way of production, which conventional representation techniques and methods cannot represent. Filmic Mapping provides such an unconventional approach in architecture that produces situated and embodied knowledges. In architectural design education, Filmic Mapping enables learners to understand how space is lived. A multi-layered and uncertain reading of a particular space enables a critical and situated knowledge production beyond the understanding of space reduced only to its physical and functional features.

WITH WHOM?

Educators and researchers guide the process, connecting learners with experts for collaborative activities.

HOW?

Filmic Mapping begins by situating the learner within a site or architectural context, with the goal of producing representations that move beyond conventional binary or linear thinking. Learners collect observations of the site and its social, cultural, and environmental dynamics, considering multiple perspectives, temporalities, and relational qualities. The method integrates cinematic tools—such as camera angles, framing, or narrative techniques—with traditional architectural representation methods, including drawing, collaging, and writing. Learners explore spatial elements from the points of view of the film character, the camera, and the viewer, producing layered, non-linear interpretations of place. Learners produce drawings, diagrams, and textual annotations that overlap or juxtapose viewpoints, combine multiple scales, or reflect atmospheric, experiential, and relational qualities. Filmic Mapping encourages critical reflection on how representation techniques influence perception and understanding of space, and challenges dominant conventions of architectural drawing, such as the singular plan or section perspective. Filmic Mapping incorporates engagement with external agents—community members, local stakeholders, or cultural participants—whose voices and experiences inform the mapping process. Learners may collect dialogues, narratives, or observations through participatory methods and integrate them into the spatial representation. Educators guide learners to ethically incorporate these contributions, ensuring that the resulting maps reflect diverse perspectives and lived experiences, highlighting power dynamics, social interactions, and the multiplicity of meanings within a space.

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Life Story



WHAT?

The Life Story method is a qualitative research approach aimed at understanding a social context and the underlying social processes by delving into an individual's personal experiences. This method fosters a personal and intimate connection, involving open, direct, verbal questions to elicit detailed narratives. Traditionally, the interviewer maintains control over the interaction while collaborating with the participant. In architectural research, life story narratives can reveal how individuals experience, perceive, and assign meaning to the spaces they inhabit, providing valuable insights into the relationship between life trajectories and the built environment.

WHY?

This approach enables the examination of events or situations from specific perspectives, allowing researchers to explore the significance and concerns of stakeholders, their relationships, and beliefs. In life stories, individuals recount their personal experiences that have profoundly influenced their lives. This method helps uncover how people's spatial experiences and memories shape their relationship with places, contributing to a richer understanding of the built environment's social and emotional dimensions. The method aims to capture a unique conceptualisation of these narratives, enriching and giving meaning to the knowledge generated about social reality.

WITH WHOM?

The tool connects learners and educators with community residents and social collectives, fostering collaboration supported by educational institutions, NGOs, researchers, and other local organisations.

HOW?

The interview, usually unstructured, aims to gather in-depth information about various aspects of a person's life, such as education, health, and family, among others. Conducted by the researcher, who acts as a narrator, transcriber and storyteller, the process involves multiple interviews to elicit the individual's subjective accounts of events and personal assessments of their existence. This method allows for the exploration of individuals' lived spatial experiences, uncovering how architectural environments intersect with personal narratives and everyday life. It consists of four crucial stages. First, the preliminary phase involves the researcher selecting the topic and the focus of the research. Secondly, there are contacts, negotiations and contracts, during which the criteria for inclusion-exclusion of participants are established, the parties involved are defined, and they are provided with information about the research. Thirdly, data collection takes place through interviews. The use of a fieldwork notebook improves the control of the process and prepares the materials for analysis. Finally, the analysis of the narratives must be aligned with the desired outcomes of the research.

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Literature Review



WHAT?

A Literature Review is a comprehensive and objective summary along with a critical examination of the relevant research and non-research literature available on the subject of inquiry. Its purpose is to identify and assess all pertinent literature related to a particular topic to draw conclusions about the underlying question. Additionally, it serves to update the reader on the current state of literature in the field and establishes a foundation for further objectives, such as justifying future research in that area. The process of conducting a Literature Review entails researching, reading, analysing, evaluating, and summarising scholarly literature. The outcomes of a Literature Review may take the form of a complete report, article, thesis, dissertation, or grant proposal. Various types can be mentioned, including narrative literature reviews, systematic literature reviews, scoping literature reviews, argumentative literature reviews, integrative literature reviews, and theoretical literature reviews. In architectural education and research, Literature Reviews enable learners and practitioners to critically examine existing design strategies, spatial theories, and case studies, providing a foundation for informed design decisions and evidence-based architectural interventions.

WHY?

Its main purpose is to provide the reader with a broad basis for understanding existing knowledge and to highlight the importance of further research. By pointing out gaps or inconsistencies in a body of knowledge, it has the potential to spark research ideas, helping the researcher to shape or define research questions or hypotheses. Essentially, a literature review provides an understanding of the discourse surrounding a particular topic and the perspectives from which people approach it. Considered the cornerstone of research methods, the literature review is often conducted at the beginning of research, laying the foundation for all subsequent phases of the project. In architectural pedagogy and practice, Literature Reviews enable learners to critically situate their design or research projects within existing social, cultural, and spatial contexts.

WITH WHOM?

Educators and researchers guide the process, connecting learners with experts.

HOW?

The initial phase involves pinpointing the focus of the Literature Review, clarifying the subject matter of interest, and establishing the reasons for its relevance. It is recommended to start with a precise and focused topic, allowing for possible expansion as the review progresses. The second step involves literature searching, commonly conducted through electronic databases using computers. Keyword searches, the predominant method, require careful selection of terms to obtain relevant data. Employing alternative keywords and applying Boolean operators ("AND," "OR," and "NOT") enhances the search strategy. Rapid development of artificial intelligence is also offering new tools which help identifying new papers related with our topic. Keeping a record of search keywords and methods is vital for later detailing the search process. Moving on to the third step, the collection, reading, and analysis of the literature come into play. Initially, a preliminary reading of collected articles, using abstracts for insight, aids in classification. A more methodical and critical examination follows, incorporating an index or summary system with article titles, authors, research study purposes and methodologies, findings, and outcomes. Determining the paper's objective and providing a brief summary, encompassing key thoughts, comments, strengths, and weaknesses, is crucial. The fourth step involves composing the review. Maintain concise sentences with clear messages, ensuring accurate and consistent spelling and grammar. Organising the material objectively and structuring the review are pivotal for its comprehensiveness. The written report should consist of an introduction, body, and conclusion, culminating in a comprehensive bibliographical list encompassing all referenced books, journal articles, reports, and other media. In architectural practice and pedagogy, instead of treating sources as abstract arguments, learners and practitioners can map them against built examples, site observations, or community case studies. For example, when reviewing texts on adaptive reuse, one might annotate articles with photos of local buildings, sketches, or interview excerpts from residents. This practice grounds theoretical debates in lived spatial realities and helps learners see how scholarship can both inform and be challenged by situated architectural processes.

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Mapping in Design Studio



WHAT?

Mapping is a practice of producing multiple and fragmented knowledges of place, while acknowledging the determining role of the mapper. It is coined as a term in opposition to map-making, which is a traditional way of surveying and representing land in order to render a certain knowledge of place neutral, objective, and reliable in favour of hegemony. Mapping suggests a critical approach to given singular knowledge of place by providing performative tools with which subjects and subjective knowledges may flourish in relation to place. In urban and architectural design, Mapping has proved to be useful as an analytical and visualising tool in relating design to various local and global dynamics, such as human behaviour patterns, socio-economic conditions, and physical transformations. However, Mapping provides more than analytical and visualisation tools, which produce representations of a linked and dynamic world. Mapping suggests a performance of a place. Mapping in situated pedagogies suggests engaged, participatory, and performative ways of working at a place in order to produce multiple knowledges and further take critical action in design research. Mapping as a situated practice may be seen as a dynamic relationship among the self (the mapper/the learner), community, and environment, those which transform continuously and simultaneously. Making viewpoints and methods of the mapper visible and questionable, Mapping offers tools for a transformative pedagogy. One is urged to take an ethical position, question the ways in which Mapping produces knowledge, and avoid harmful practice and content.

WHY?

Mapping in architectural design education, suggests ways to recognise multiple and alternative knowledges of a place and challenges the authoritative single knowledge. Mapping may be employed in situated pedagogies for participation and collectivity. Accepting the partiality of one's point of view, Mapping gathers multiple mappers in producing simultaneously diverse knowledges of a place, even though those may be conflicting. Mapping suggests a potentially rich understanding of place, which is continuously in re-creation through the practices of describing and representing, i.e. mapper's actions. The participants of the educational environment where Mapping is employed critically, become aware that there is no single truth, but knowledge is always situated. This raises awareness for multiple agencies in architectural design and its education. Learners are invited to consider others' knowledges in the design process, especially those of whom have been silenced systematically. This approach suggests an open understanding of site in architectural design, where we consider local knowledges as well as the expert knowledge of architects. Mapping may be regarded as an "experimentation," rather than an "imitation" of a place that performs a place rather than reproduces it. A situated understanding of mapping question then traditional practices for objectifying methods, and suggest instead self-reflexive methods. In doing so, situated mapping practices tend to unfix dominant knowledges of place and provide grounds for the production of other multiple, subjective, resistant, and critical knowledges. Mapping is employed to encourage imagination by allowing each learner to take initiative in the learning process and by offering a self-exploration and self-transforming possibility.

WITH WHOM?

Educators and researchers guide the process, connecting learners with experts.

HOW?

Mapping in the design studio begins by selecting a site or spatial phenomenon to investigate, prioritising areas where everyday practices and local knowledge may be underrepresented. Participants are encouraged to use flexible and open-ended representations, such as sketching, movable elements, or layered diagrams, to capture the temporality and fluidity of knowledge. The process is inherently participatory. Learners, educators, and potentially external collaborators collectively contribute to the Mapping, producing multiple layers of knowledge that can be viewed and compared simultaneously. This approach foregrounds subjective experiences and embodied knowledges, highlighting perspectives that may be ignored in traditional, objective maps. Mapping requires critical reflection on positionality and power. Mappers are prompted to consider their own influence in mediating knowledge and may need to “hand over the pen” to allow others to express themselves comfortably. Playful activities can be incorporated to foster shared experiences, develop common spatial languages, and encourage collaboration, while maintaining inclusivity and open participation. By revealing subtle local knowledges and challenging dominant spatial narratives, Mapping encourages learners to question authority, advocate for underrepresented voices, and explore how design can enable equitable spatial practices. The mapping process can be structured in iterative stages: first, participants individually observe and document spatial practices; second, the group synthesises observations into shared representations; third, multiple perspectives are juxtaposed and discussed to reveal power relations, social inequities, and alternative spatial logics. This iterative approach reinforces critical engagement, collective knowledge production, and socially situated understanding of architecture.

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Mosaic Approach



WHAT?

The Mosaic Approach originated from a research study aiming to incorporate the “voice of the child” in evaluating a multiagency network of services for children and families. It was later adapted to engage young children in discussing their outdoor environment. This method involves researchers gathering data through a variety of methods and subsequently integrating these distinct elements, akin to assembling tiles into a mosaic. The name of this approach represents the amalgamation of various spatial and experiential perspectives to construct a comprehensive portrayal of how children perceive and interact with architectural environments.

WHY?

This approach highlights the importance of delving into children's perspectives on their own lives, interests, priorities, and worries. Children are viewed not as passive subjects in research or society but as active participants, embodying the concept of present beings, not just future beings. These methods are implemented to amplify user voices—especially those often overlooked—in the shaping and evaluation of architectural spaces, serving as a catalyst for transformative spatial design.

WITH WHOM?

Young children and learners participate directly, guided by educators, with support from parents and collaboration with service clubs and social collectives, and backed by NGOs, educational institutions, researchers, donor organisations, and government.

HOW?

The Mosaic Approach integrates traditional tools of observation and interviews with participatory tools. Children employ cameras to capture “what is important here,” leading the researcher on a tour and controlling how it is documented. They create maps using their photos and drawings, each piece forming a part of the mosaic. The original study had two stages: stage one involved gathering materials through these diverse methods, and stage two combined these documentation pieces with parents’ and practitioners’ input for dialogue, reflection, and interpretation. This collaborative process engages both children and adults and employs various tools such as observation, child interviews, photography, book making, tours, map creation, informal interviews, and magic carpet sessions.

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Oral History



WHAT?

Oral History serves as both an academic discipline and a technique for acquiring, safeguarding, and interpreting the diverse voices and memories of individuals, communities, and participants in historical events. Through recorded interviews, this method captures memories and personal reflections of historical importance. Typically, a well-prepared interviewer engages in a dialogue with an interviewee, documenting their interaction in audio or video format. This method allows learners and researchers to connect deeply with communities, uncovering lived experiences that inform more empathetic and inclusive design approaches. Subsequently, the interview recordings are transcribed, summarised, or indexed before being archived in a library or other repositories. These interviews find utility in research or may be excerpted in various public presentations such as publications, radio or video documentaries, museum exhibitions, dramatisations, and more. Using Oral Histories in teaching architecture encourages critical engagement with the social fabric and histories embedded in the built environment. Additionally, recordings, transcripts, catalogues, photographs, and related documentary materials may be disseminated on the Internet.

WHY?

Oral History enhances our comprehension of the past by supplementing the information available in public records, statistical data, photographs, maps, letters, diaries, and other historical materials. The firsthand accounts of eyewitnesses bring diverse perspectives, filling in the gaps and, at times, challenging or contradicting documented history. Interviewers play a crucial role by posing questions that might be overlooked in other records and capturing narratives from individuals whose stories have been neglected or faded from memory. These narratives reveal how communities have experienced and shaped their environments, providing crucial context for design and planning. In certain instances, an interview becomes the sole repository of information about a particular place, event, or individuals. This method proves particularly valuable for documenting stories from minority groups or small communities that may be underrepresented in more formal histories. It is especially useful when alternative forms of evidence, whether written or visual, are scarce. For community historians, Oral History serves as an indispensable tool for exploring not just the actions of people but also their perceptions at the time and their retrospective reflections. Beyond capturing individuals' opinions and the meanings they attach to past events, Oral History is a valuable medium for preserving community stories, songs, folklore, and other elements of cultural heritage. In architectural education, engaging with these oral histories deepens learners' connection to the social and cultural layers embedded in the spaces they study and create.

WITH WHOM?

The activity is initiated by educators and researchers, involving learners alongside a small group of community residents, with the support of experts.

HOW?

Adapting to the specific research objectives of a given project or case study is essential. Typically, a research protocol involves five distinct steps or stages: In the first stage, the research goal is established, focusing on preserving cultural heritage, understanding socio-ecological systems, or informing policy and management. This stage often emphasises capturing community narratives to inform design that reflects local identities and histories. Moving to the second stage, considerations involve the type of interview and sampling approach. Two types are commonly employed: expert interviews focusing on specific aspects of land use practices, and narrative interviews with a more exploratory nature. The third stage entails preparing for the oral interview, involving steps such as selecting the interviewee, gauging their interest, scheduling a suitable time and place, conducting basic biographical research, developing a chronology of important events, and refining the question outline. The fourth stage involves conducting the interview. Finding a quiet setting, explaining the purpose to the interviewee, securing their agreement, initiating with easy questions, and allowing open-ended responses are essential. Focusing on recording personal experiences and allowing the interviewee to explore related topics adds depth. Visual aids can stimulate memory, and the interview should conclude gracefully. In the fifth stage, involves post-processing and archiving. This step is critical in architectural education as it allows learners and communities to engage with the collected stories, fostering a shared sense of place and enhancing participatory design processes. Various recorder options can capture uncompressed, preservation-quality audio files. Alternatively, smartphones often have recording software generating MP3 audio files. Uploading files to a computer, external hard drive, or cloud storage, with appropriately labelled filenames, ensures file preservation and easy identification.

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Participant Observation



WHAT?

It is a research approach in anthropology that entails deep involvement and prolonged immersion in a specific culture, actively engaging in its everyday practices. In architectural pedagogy, Participant Observation can be used to understand how space is inhabited, experienced, and transformed through everyday practices. It involves the researcher observing the subject of the study, either by actively participating in the action as a member of the study population or by being a detached observer present on the scene.

WHY?

The aim is to meticulously document the behaviours and ideological frameworks within a designated community, organisation, or institution. In architectural research, this can provide insights previously unknown to designers—essential for crafting context-sensitive project proposals, refining site analysis methods, and accurately interpreting other collected data. Through this process, a comprehensive narrative emerges, facilitating a deeper comprehension of human behaviour.

WITH WHOM?

Learners participate directly, guided by educators, with strong involvement from service clubs and social collectives, supported by NGOs and local institutions.

HOW?

On the day of fieldwork, record observations promptly in a diary format. Begin with primary observations like date, time, location, actors, event sequence and any interruptions. Supplement these primary observations with secondary insights, including statements from others regarding observed events, as well as personal experiential data such as emotions and reflections. Additionally, incorporate circumstantial and background details about the organisation and key roles. Consider creating a checklist to ensure comprehensive observation coverage, categorising elements such as spatial configuration, materiality, circulation flows, human interaction with built elements, and environmental conditions. Researchers may assume various roles along the observer-participant spectrum, adapting their level of involvement based on the research subject's nature and requirements.

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Participation Matrix or Stakeholder Participation Planning



WHAT?

The Stakeholder Participation Planning Matrix serves as a tool to structure engagement with stakeholders throughout an evaluation process. This matrix becomes an essential resource for learners to understand how diverse community voices and professional actors intersect within design processes. It not only provides guidance for planning but also presents the plan in a clear and consolidated format. This matrix may encompass both external and internal actors, including departments and individuals within an organisation. By using the Participation Matrix, architecture learners and educators can critically reflect on power dynamics and inclusivity in stakeholder engagement, ensuring that design outcomes respond meaningfully to all parties involved. Essentially, the Participation Matrix outlines who should be involved and in what capacity during a particular process.

WHY?

Once you have determined the course of action for the target group through a problem and solution tree, the next step is to allocate responsibilities. This involves dividing tasks both within and among organisations. This tool is instrumental in transparently distributing and overseeing these tasks and duties. In teaching architecture, using this tool helps learners understand the collaborative nature of design implementation and the importance of clearly defined roles within multidisciplinary teams and community partnerships. Essentially, it clarifies who will handle specific responsibilities, especially in the context of implementing change, and identifies those involved in providing information, advice, or supervision.

WITH WHOM?

Educators and researchers lead the initiative, engaging learners alongside community residents, service clubs, and social collectives, with support from NGOs, government, donor organisations, and private and public institutions.

HOW?

These are the steps to create a Participation Matrix: first, conduct a ground verification by identifying time-bound activities and results, and pinpoint stakeholders who may have a role in the project. This includes engaging community members, learners, faculty, and local professionals to ensure diverse perspectives are considered. Second, sketch the matrix for the (diagnosis, change, or project implementation) process. Create columns for each stakeholder, rows for each activity of the process, and additional rows for the overall supervision of components (results, purpose, and overall objectives.) Third, define the tasks and roles. Complete the boxes with I = Inform (receives information), A = Consult (provides advice), P = Partnership (gives approval), D = Control (makes decisions,) and R = Supervision (holds responsibility over delegated authority.) This is particularly relevant if internal divisions of an organisation are included in this matrix. This process also helps architecture learners grasp the complexities of stakeholder collaboration in real-world projects, fostering critical skills for participatory design and equitable decision-making. Fourth, review the participation, eliminate overlaps or gaps, and reconcile any potential contradictions with existing task and power distributions.

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Personas



WHAT?

Personas are imaginative and detailed representations of intended users, created to embody a specific group united by common interests. These personas provide a tangible identity to the user, a vivid, captivating, and practical representation that guides the design process. In socially situated architecture, Personas help learners consider how race, class, gender, ability, and cultural identity intersect with spatial needs, making invisible dynamics visible. They communicate insights about users to your design team in a unique way, offering a depth of understanding that other tools cannot match. By embodying real social tensions, inequalities, or power relations, Personas encourage critical thinking about who is served—and who is excluded—by design decisions. Essentially, Personas become a relatable “character” that both final users and design teams can connect with.

WHY?

Personas offer multiple points of view about a service, enabling design teams to identify and connect with different interest groups within their target audience. Well-crafted Personas shift the focus from vague demographics to the genuine desires and requirements of actual individuals. Although personas themselves are fictional, the motivations and responses they represent are authentic; they are compiled from feedback gathered during the research phase, encapsulating real-world perceptions. They cultivate curiosity and empathy toward end-users, fostering team engagement in a manner that other forms of user data representation cannot achieve. By encouraging learners to explore how systemic inequities are expressed in everyday spatial practices, personas deepen awareness of power, access, and exclusion in the built environment. In essence, personas assist you, your team, and your organisation in adopting a more user-centric approach.

WITH WHOM?

Researchers and educators lead the initiative, engaging learners in activities supported by NGOs and strengthened through collaboration with private and public institutions.

HOW?

The most common way of developing Personas is to collate research insights into common-interest groupings, which can then be developed into a workable “character.” The key to a successful Persona is how engaging it proves to be, and thus a wide range of techniques – from visual representations to detailed anecdotal profiles – can be used to bring these characters to life. Most Personas are developed from research insights gathered from stakeholder maps, shadowing, interviews, and the like. Before you begin any Persona effort, you should figure out what problems you’re trying to solve and what materials (specifically, data sources) are already available for you to use. This includes identifying how structural inequities (e.g., housing insecurity, limited mobility, displacement) might influence the needs of different user groups. Then, organise assumptions; turn data into information and information into Personas. After that, create a Persona campaign and introduce the Personas to your organisation. In an educational setting, this could involve presenting Personas in critiques, design studios, or public consultations as a way to centre user narratives in spatial decisions. Next, use the Personas in specific ways to help during the design, development, evaluation, and release of your product. Finally, measure the success of the Persona effort and create a plan to reuse or retire the Personas.

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Queering the Archive



WHAT?

Queering an Archive involves tactics based on the researching subject, together with the time and duration of the research, aiming to subvert conventional archival practices in order to include multiple agents for possible futures. Queering the Archive is a practice that interrogates the power dynamics behind archival decisions, uncovers the reasons for exclusion, and seeks to reclaim and amplify the voices of those who have been silenced or erased. It challenges whose stories are told, who gets to tell them, and why certain voices are left out, while also unfixing conventional archival structures. As a situated methodology, Queering the Archive allows architectural design studios to explore archives to better understand a site, create new archives, and encourage collective and collaborative critical thinking. By recognising the partial and fragmented nature of knowledge and the failures of memory in preserving histories, this method encourages architectural design to engage with the complexities of unfinished or incomplete narratives of a site. Archiving, the process of collecting, organising, preserving, and storing records, plays a crucial role in shaping how history is written and remembered. Architecture and urban design studios use archives in their analysis of a site and also make their own archives to inform and document their design research. While archives are often viewed as objective sources of evidence about the past, they are actually controlled by institutions or those in power, and thus inherently biased. Queering the Archive critically engages with archives to challenge traditional historical narratives that often exclude or marginalise certain perspectives and experiences.

WHY?

Queering the Archive reveals hidden or suppressed histories while challenging the heteronormative assumptions that shape how historical records are organised or interpreted. Queering the Archive reinterprets existing archival materials through a queer lens, emphasising the fluidity of gender and sexuality. This approach continually explores performative tools that challenge and reform the archive itself, ensuring it remains inclusive of the fluidity of identities and experiences. By Queering the Archive, one aims to disrupt dominant historical narratives, offering more inclusive and pluralistic accounts. This serves as a form of resistance against erasure, validating and honouring queer and other marginalised lives throughout history. For both learners and educators, Queering the Archive is also a self-reflective process. It encourages them to question their own identities and examine their roles in history, asking whether they too have been silenced or, perhaps unintentionally, have silenced others. Through Queering the Archive in architectural design studios, we—as learners, educators, and communities—engage with deep histories, critically examine the agencies behind and surrounding actions, take responsibility, and connect networks to speculate on potential futures through architectural design.

WITH WHOM?

Educators and researchers guide the process, connecting learners with communities and experts for collaborative activities.

HOW?

In architectural and urban design, Queering the Archive provides a way to look at things differently, through a subversive and playful lens, in order to unearth marginalised or hidden histories. It seeks to challenge normative assumptions by discovering detoured methods that disrupt established beliefs. Just as the term “queer” has been reclaimed and subverted, this approach also works in a playful reality to create an inclusive and non-othering archival space. Queering the Archive engages with records and documents through finding creative ways to interact with them. The method emphasises reflexivity, as addressed by many feminist and queer researchers: learners capture their own subjective experiences, feelings, and assumptions while engaging with archival materials. By annotating documents, inserting personal responses, or experimenting with formats such as collage, montage, or speculative rewriting, learners intervene “between the lines” to unearth hidden or marginalised stories. Collegial exchanges—such as group discussions, collaborative annotations, or even informal formats like “kitchen table talks” or shared online platforms—support this process by creating spaces for collective critique and reimagination. In architectural design education, Queering the Archive does not treat the archive as something to be merely used but as something to be actively engaged with. Learners may invite community members to share alternative narratives, personal documents, or embodied memories, and these contributions become part of the reimagined archive. This process not only acknowledges the multiplicity of histories but also challenges normative power structures by amplifying non-dominant voices. It encourages critical thought and speculation about the unwritten or erased histories of communities. This approach works in conjunction with other essential components such as critical fabulation and storytelling, recognising that knowledge is not fixed but open to speculations, allowing new histories—those that have never been told—to emerge.

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Reading With



WHAT?

Reading With stands as a feminist, immersive, and collaborative method. It comprises a structured series of reading layers, providing participants the opportunity to engage collectively in reading experiences—both with each other and with authors from marginalised backgrounds. This exploration aims to uncover sidelined or concealed aspects of the built environment. Developed through collaborative workshops involving scholars and learners, the Reading With approach is designed to assist researchers in actively seeking voices beyond the established canon. In architectural pedagogy and research, it encourages moving away from entrenched practices that position the architect or critic as the predominant force in shaping the built environment, promoting a more inclusive examination of diverse perspectives.

WHY?

Engaging in active re-reading of women's writings allows us to discern subtle nuances that expand, contradict, or reshape our existing understanding of architecture and its discourses within a specific timeframe. Employing a layered reading approach facilitates an intersectional examination of marginalised voices, concurrently addressing issues of race, class, gender, sexuality, and ability, all while considering our own positions as researchers. This straightforward yet valuable method can be applied across various contexts, offering a significant discovery by encouraging us to scrutinise a text from multiple perspectives. In architectural pedagogy and practice, Reading With enables learners to critically engage with diverse architectural texts and narratives, fostering socially situated perspectives that highlight underrepresented voices and promote inclusive approaches to design and spatial understanding. This engagement serves as a means to unearth the agency inherent in these marginalised voices, contributing to the production of knowledge aimed at fostering a more equitable society.

WITH WHOM?

The activity is initiated by educators and researchers, involving learners in collaborative learning.

HOW?

To prepare for an immersive reading workshop, the authors recommend selecting a short piece of text, recording a reading and providing hard copies along with wall-sized versions. Using six colours of highlighter and post-its, the activity, ideal for 3 to 12 participants, lasts about two hours with a single break. The process begins with the introduction of the text, the author, the participants and the exercise. The layered approach unfolds organically. Starting with green-highlighted proper nouns, participants collaboratively engage in a first reading. The second layer involves listening and responding to the voice recording, with a graphical emotional response plotted on a diagram. Post-its capture feedback. Successive layers emphasise specific pronouns ("I," "We," and "They"), marked with corresponding colours. Each layer includes feedback moments, fostering discussion. A sixth layer focuses on places and architecture, incorporating brainstorming and post-it notes. A 20-minute feedback session delves deeper, exploring the author's unique perspective and surprising elements revealed through multiple readings. The workshop concludes with a 10-minute reflection and evaluation. Overall, this method encourages active engagement, intersectional exploration, and a broader understanding of the text's nuances. This method can be applied in architectural education to critically examine how spatial, social, and cultural narratives are embedded in texts, enabling learners to reflect on marginalised voices, the built environment, and ethical design implications. It fosters an awareness of how language and perspective shape our understanding of architecture and its social context.

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Reflective Journals



WHAT?

Reflective Journals serve as personalised accounts of students' learning journeys. Educators request learners to document learning-related incidents, either in the midst of the learning process or immediately afterward. Journal entries may be prompted by inquiries regarding course content, research, learners' or researchers' individual ideas, or their thought processes concerning specific experiences. The cultivation of self-reflection skills and the establishment of this habit can significantly enhance the learning process. This tool can be applied not only with participants in a research project but also with learners enrolled in a course. Additionally, Reflective Journals in architectural pedagogy encourage learners to critically examine how their design decisions impact social, cultural, and environmental contexts, fostering socially conscious and ethically engaged designers.

WHY?

Here are some advantages of utilising a Reflective Journal: firstly, it is less time-consuming for the researcher compared to conducting interviews, and some individuals are more inclined to express themselves in written form rather than discussing matters in person. Secondly, the process is straightforward, allowing for the creation of low-tech copies by handwriting questions in a notebook. Alternatively, a custom notebook can be designed by a graphic artist and multiple copies can be printed. Thirdly, participants are not obligated to complete the entire journal. They have the flexibility to write freely about their day or respond to specific questions. They can also incorporate drawings, poetry, photos, or images cut from magazines. Additionally, the journal need not be a physical book. Fourthly, while journals have traditionally been employed in exploratory writing activities, Reflective Journals extend beyond teaching writing skills and can offer additional benefits to learners. Lastly, they provide an opportunity to engage with the unfolding of our lives in a comprehensive and open-ended manner, fostering meaningful insights through reflection on these experiences. In architectural pedagogy and practice, Reflective Journals help learners critically document and analyse their design processes, decisions, and interactions, enabling them to uncover the social, cultural, and environmental dimensions of the spaces they study or design.

WITH WHOM?

The activity is initiated by educators and researchers, involving learners in collaborative learning.

HOW?

Consider these suggestions when utilising Reflective Journals. Regularly make entries in the journal, engaging in a self-dialogue. Treat the journal as an intensive psychological workbook, capturing all facets of your existence. Endeavour to share your growth through journal writing with others. Considering the six stages of reflection can be beneficial. Initially, focus on observations or descriptions—here, learners, researchers, or participants articulate what they saw or their perspective on a specific event. The inquiry is: What happened? Moving on, delve into questions and feelings, encouraging learners to explore their emotions and thoughts. What were you thinking and feeling? Proceed to speculations and evaluation, where the learner reflects on the positive and negative aspects of the experience after thoughtful consideration. Next is self-awareness and analysis, prompting learners to immerse themselves in the situation, contemplating its implications. What sense can you make of the situation? Follow with the integration of theory and ideas or conclusion, guiding learners to connect their experiences with learned theories or ideas. What else could you have done? Finally, in critique and action plan, learners engage in self-reflection and create a plan, considering what they would do if a similar situation arose again. Learners should be encouraged to reflect not only on their personal experiences but also on the social, spatial, and ethical dimensions of the studio or site. This includes considering how their design decisions affect different users, communities, and the built environment, fostering awareness of power dynamics, inclusivity, and the broader societal impact of architectural practice.

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Research Storytelling



WHAT?

Research Storytelling involves sharing narratives about specific groups chosen for representation. It provides a means to connect with audiences and peers, fostering emotional bonds and building trust. Human stories and myths form the essence of our shared experiences, giving significance to our lives. Research Storytelling becomes a method to surface the lived experiences of individuals and communities affected by spatial injustice, displacement, or marginalisation. This can be achieved through various mediums such as photography, videography, drawings, animation, writing, or any artistic form that conveys a story. Stories empower the listener to learn, gather information, knowledge, and routines, offering both facts and illustrative examples simultaneously. They help architecture learners move beyond abstract data by grounding research in empathy, lived context, and place-based understanding.

WHY?

The purpose of Research Storytelling is to establish stronger and more meaningful connections among members of organisations, communities, or audiences while fostering shared ideas or values. Empathising with the people in the communities we design for is essential to truly comprehend the challenges we aim to address. One effective method for achieving this understanding is by capturing their stories through visual representations of themselves, their environments, and the spaces they inhabit. These stories help uncover how power structures, cultural identity, and history influence spatial experience, revealing tensions and patterns that quantitative data alone may obscure. This allows us to perceive the world from their perspective and provides valuable insights into their user experience, enhancing our understanding of the challenges they face in their everyday lives. Finally, Research Storytelling helps shift architectural thinking from designing for communities to designing with them.

WITH WHOM?

Researchers and educators initiate the activity with learners and clients, in collaboration with community residents, and with the institutional support of NGOs, government, and private and public institutions.

HOW?

In Research Storytelling, understanding the context of the community is vital. If this is your first encounter, having a local representative guide you and inform you about cultural norms can be helpful. Building trust is paramount; once trust has been established, explain your purpose for taking photos or videos, making sure you have their consent. Remember that a story is not limited to portraits; everyday objects in their environment can reveal compelling narratives. Images of housing conditions, informal infrastructure, signage, or shared spaces often speak volumes about lived experience, resourcefulness, and structural inequities. Actively listening to and interacting with the community encourages openness and valuable information. A flexible approach allows you to uncover new stories and learn more about the people you are designing for. Approach interactions as opportunities for co-learning, where participants are not simply subjects of research, but co-authors of the narratives being shared. Interacting with community representatives and members offers diverse perspectives and enriches understanding. Finally, sharing captured images with the community not only strengthens connections, but also increases their trust. This reciprocal exchange reinforces transparency and ensures communities retain agency over how their stories are represented and used in the design process.

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Research Surveys



WHAT?

A Research Survey is a valuable tool used to gather information by posing a series of questions to individuals. Its primary objective is to understand the thoughts, emotions, and opinions of a specific group. Surveys aim to be applicable across a broader population, often involving a carefully selected sample group. This sample helps describe specific group characteristics or test hypotheses about relationships within the group. Research Surveys can serve as tools for uncovering place-based knowledge, lived spatial experiences, and community needs that often go unrecognised in top-down planning processes. They support participatory and inclusive design approaches by amplifying the voices of marginalised communities and informing more just architectural interventions.

WHY?

Research Surveys play a vital role in collecting valuable data for various purposes. They help in exploring ideas, understanding people's attitudes and behaviours towards businesses and products, assessing customer satisfaction, and conducting in-depth research. Surveys are designed to centre lived experiences and give voice to underrepresented or marginalised groups affected by spatial and urban interventions. In the context of socially situated architectural pedagogies, Research Surveys are essential for understanding the diverse needs and perspectives of community members, evaluating the social impact of architectural designs, and ensuring that projects align with the goals of social justice and inclusivity. This method provides accurate information on specific questions, offering a detailed insight into the characteristics of a population. Surveys generate concrete evidence, often known as "hard data," to support the identification of issues or justify specific strategies when communicating with stakeholders such as donors, governments, or decision-makers. Surveys can be conducted through face-to-face interviews, email, or occasional phone conversations, making them a versatile tool for gathering essential information.

WITH WHOM?

The activity is initiated by educators and researchers, involving learners alongside a small group of community residents.

HOW?

A typical Research Survey includes three essential elements: a well-designed sampling method to ensure representation, a standardised questionnaire for consistent data collection, and analysis methods enabling the generation of results and insights. These components are employed not only for data collection but also as tools for community engagement and co-production of knowledge. When undertaking extensive surveys, the initial step involves clearly defining the purpose and framing questions that are both precise and unbiased. Careful consideration at this stage ensures that the survey objectives are well-defined and easily understood. Subsequently, a methodology for data collection is established, which may involve interviews, observations, or direct measurements. The next phase entails crafting a structured format, such as questionnaires or scripts, to maintain consistency in responses across different interviewers. Defining a representative sample of the population follows, often requiring categorisation into specific groups to ensure a comprehensive understanding. During the data collection process, enumerators are trained, and supervisors are appointed to maintain methodological standards and oversee the work. Learners can take on these roles, gaining hands-on experience while learning to navigate ethical considerations and power dynamics in fieldwork. After gathering the information, a thorough analysis is conducted to extract meaningful insights, which are then documented and shared appropriately. It is worth noting that providing feedback to contributors, a practice often overlooked, holds significant value, fostering a sense of collaboration and recognition among those who participated. This step is particularly important in community-based pedagogies, where reciprocity and accountability are fundamental.

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Role Playing



WHAT?

Role Playing serves as an interactive tool that promotes learning and cultivates empathy. Participants engage in scenarios where they have to act out specific roles, without predetermined lines or rehearsals. Similar to theatrical methods, role plays can be utilised to explore and generate ideas. These interactive training experiences empower participants to actively contribute to enhancing the service experience. Role Playing helps learners step into the shoes of diverse community members, deepening their understanding of social and spatial challenges.

WHY?

Role Playing equips architecture learners with the necessary tools and training to effectively address the complex, context-specific needs. The insights derived from tools like personas are directly applied to service touchpoints, fostering empathy with future users and stakeholders. In the context of socially situated architecture, role plays create space for learners to engage with diverse cultural, economic, and political realities, highlighting how architecture both shapes and is shaped by social dynamics. These simulations are frequently employed to transform theoretical concepts into —such as equity, inclusion, and power in the built environment— practical experiences, encouraging participants to explore “what-if” scenarios. Furthermore, Role Playing aids in enhancing communication skills, deepening understanding of situations, and appreciating the multiple and often conflicting perspectives that inform architectural practice.

WITH WHOM?

Community residents and clients participate alongside educators and learners, supported by researchers, NGOs, and government representatives from private and public institutions.

HOW?

Before engaging in a Role Play, participants are briefed with a scenario outline, along with diverse perspectives on the situation, assigned to each participant. Each role description comes with specific objectives, which may conflict with the goals of other participants. The core purpose is to observe how each player navigates the given situation. During the role play, participants respond in real-time according to the roles they have been assigned, simulating genuine life interactions. Scenarios are grounded in architectural contexts, such as community consultations, site-specific negotiations, or participatory design processes. Guided prompt cards, detailing specific personas, issues, moods, or personal traits, reflect real-world stakeholders—such as local residents, policymakers, developers, or marginalised groups—and help focus the exercise on spatial justice, access, and inclusivity. Recording these sessions on video enables participants to review and analyse each situation later. To enhance the learning experience, one or two participants act as observers, providing feedback post-role play. The feedback given to participants should be precise and meaningful, enabling the role player to take constructive actions. Follow-up discussions include discussions on power dynamics, spatial implications, and ethical considerations in design. All participants are granted ample time and space for self-reflection after participating in the Role Play.

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Safaris



WHAT?

Safari is a tool designed for immersing in and evaluating specific products, services, user journeys, and environments within their natural contexts. It offers an opportunity to move beyond familiar settings, office or classroom spaces, enabling learners or researchers to encounter real-world instances. They are used to observe how different groups experience, navigate, and are impacted by urban and architectural spaces. During a Safari, participants venture into the real world to identify exemplary and deficient service, space, or product encounters. A successful Safari demands curiosity, openness, and above all, empathy. This approach aids designers in acquiring insightful perspectives and creative ideas about the problem, comprehending every aspect of interaction with the space or service, observing how others behave in that environment, and ultimately capturing the views and perceptions of other users. It fosters critical reflection on how space is shaped by social, cultural, and political forces, offering grounded insights into how architecture intersects with everyday life.

WHY?

A successful Safari requires a curious and open mind, but also empathy. This empathetic approach helps designers to gain intriguing ideas and inspiration about the service, the space or the environment. It allows them to thoroughly understand all aspects of the interaction, observe the behaviours of others and capture diverse opinions and perceptions. The outcome of the safari includes written or visual documentation, such as photographs, drawings or videos, but the most crucial aspect is the first-hand experience itself. By situating oneself in real environments and experiencing conditions directly, learners and practitioners develop a deeper sensitivity to social and cultural contexts that shape spatial experiences. This method allows anyone conducting a design process to gather reliable data with minimal financial investment. In comparison to other tools and ethnographic methods, its most notable feature is its affordability. Yet its value lies not only in cost-effectiveness, but in its ability to cultivate embodied, ethical, and context-aware design thinking adapted to architecture.

WITH WHOM?

Educators and researchers lead the initiative, engaging learners and clients together with community residents, supported by NGOs, government, and private and public institutions.

HOW?

Initially, we define the target audience and identify the specific problem or need we aim to address. This guiding principle propels us throughout the entire Safari process. It's crucial to document every emerging question at this stage. This includes identifying marginalised or underserved communities and focusing on spatial inequities they face. In the subsequent step, we determine which locations and individuals to visit during our research, ensuring no vital points of contact are overlooked. This means prioritising places where social, cultural, or economic exclusion manifests in the built environment, such as informal settlements, contested public spaces, or neglected infrastructure. The third step involves selecting appropriate tools for data collection. Capture information through photos, voice recordings, and physical items during your fieldwork. The fourth step entails spending a full day in the field, visiting 6–8 locations to gather unbiased data. Finally, the gathered and analysed materials are synthesised and often compiled into a design brief, significantly contributing to subsequent creative processes. The synthesis process should highlight social context and equity concerns, helping to frame design challenges in terms of justice and inclusivity. Design Safari, along with similar research methods, proves most effective when utilised in the early stages of the design process.

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Semi-structured Interview



WHAT?

Semi-structured Interviews represent a research approach that combines predetermined questions with open-ended exploration, aiming to delve deeper into participants' perspectives, attitudes, and experiences. Unlike closed surveys with fixed questions, Semi-structured Interviews are flexible and open, allowing for the exploration of new ideas based on the interviewee's responses. These interviews can serve as an initial activity to comprehend an issue involving various stakeholders or be utilised later for a more thorough investigation. They offer learners the opportunity to engage directly with community members, uncovering spatial needs, cultural practices, and social dynamics that often go unnoticed in conventional planning. This method fosters empathy and critical reflection, equipping future architects to design with and for people rather than for abstract user profiles.

WHY?

The essence of a successful Semi-structured Interview lies in the relationship between the interviewer and the interviewee. The interviewer plays a vital role in fostering trust, creating a comfortable atmosphere, and skilfully guiding the discussion through a thoughtful set of topics and questions. This approach encourages deep and meaningful exploration of the subject matter, providing richer and more nuanced insights. In socially situated architecture pedagogies, Semi-structured Interviews are particularly valuable for understanding the complex and diverse experiences of stakeholders, allowing designers to incorporate these insights into more inclusive and contextually relevant designs.

WITH WHOM?

Educators and researchers lead the initiative, engaging learners alongside community residents, social collectives, and service clubs, with support from NGOs, donor organisations, and private and public institutions.

HOW?

Here are some guidelines for conducting Semi-structured Interviews: First, clarify your research question beforehand; it's essential to have a clear understanding of your research objectives. Second, create an interview guide containing a set of questions and prompts meant to gather information from participants. This guide should encompass both open-ended and closed-ended questions. Third, pilot your interview guide with a small group of participants before conducting full-scale interviews. Fourth, identify and recruit participants, ensuring that your sample accurately represents the population under study. Fifth, schedule interviews once participants have been identified and recruited. Sixth, during the interviews, establish rapport with participants, fostering a comfortable environment where they feel secure sharing their experiences and opinions. Seventh, consider providing compensation or incentives to participants to demonstrate the value placed on their time and contributions. Remember that your role is to learn, not to teach; start with straightforward questions that require descriptive responses. Gradually progress to more complex structural and contrasting questions. Individual interviews should ideally last no longer than 45 minutes to an hour, while group interviews should not extend beyond 2 hours.

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Shadowing



WHAT?

Shadowing is a qualitative research tool conducted on a small scale, where the researcher takes on the role of an observer. People shadowing entails closely observing individuals or groups in their daily lives to gain insight into the environments they inhabit. Shadowing can reveal how people navigate, occupy, and contest space in ways shaped by social, economic, and political conditions. Researchers immerse themselves in the lives of customers, frontline staff, or behind-the-scenes individuals to observe their actions and experiences. This might involve following residents, caretakers, or informal users through public spaces, housing units, or institutional facilities to understand spatial practices that are often overlooked in conventional design processes. This method enables first hand observation of the contextual factors that can impact a person's behaviour and motivations. Importantly, the researcher refrains from interfering with the participants to ensure their natural behaviour is not influenced during the research process. Such non-intrusive observation is particularly valuable in uncovering spatial injustices and responses to exclusion, accessibility challenges, or environmental discomforts.

WHY?

Shadowing proves to be an exceptionally powerful tool for collecting real-time data in research. By directly observing user behaviour or experiencing it, researchers gain profound and valuable insights that might otherwise remain hidden. In socially situated architecture, Shadowing allows researchers and learners to observe how spatial inequities manifest in everyday life—such as through limited access, unsafe conditions, or exclusionary design. Moreover, this approach emphasises the user's perspective, fostering a deeper sense of empathy in the researcher or learner. Through Shadowing, researchers can pinpoint instances where issues arise. Witnessing these moments first hand enables them to identify and document problems, even those that individuals involved might not recognise as issues. This is especially useful for uncovering systemic barriers or unintended consequences of built environments that traditional design methods often overlook.

WITH WHOM?

Led by educators and researchers, the tool connects learners and clients with community residents, strengthened by the participation of NGOs and the institutional backing of government and private and public entities.

HOW?

Before embarking on Shadowing, it is crucial to establish key questions: Whom to observe? How to actively engage in the situation? Determine the specific information you are seeking and consider the methods for documenting your findings. This includes selecting participants who represent diverse social backgrounds and spatial experiences, particularly those from marginalised or underrepresented groups. Video recording is particularly effective in capturing nuances often overlooked with other tools. Accompany the individual in their natural setting while attempting to be unobtrusive. Various methods, including text and photographs, can be used to document observations. Encourage attention to spatial interactions, accessibility challenges, and informal uses of space that reveal social dynamics. Utilise these resources to complete a template for the person you are shadowing. Encourage your team to fill out similar sheets for their respective observations. This structured approach enables comparison of observations across different participants. The qualitative data collected is then analysed to identify typical or significant patterns. Shadowing methods include natural (non-intrusive), controlled (researcher designs and observes a task), and participatory (researcher engages in the activity being observed for first hand perspective).

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Social Mapping



WHAT?

Social Mapping stands as a prevalent tool in participatory action research and architectural education, characterised by a cartographic, two-dimensional visual representation. This method focuses on illustrating spatial and social relationships within urban and architectural contexts, including living conditions, housing characteristics, and social infrastructure such as roads, drainage systems, schools, railway tracks, religious buildings, post offices, wells, and community halls. What sets Social Mapping apart from conventional maps is its distinctiveness in two key aspects: it is cocreated collaboratively with community members, learners, and designers rather than by external experts alone, and it deviates from the conventional scale-based representation. Instead, it captures what the local community deems pertinent and significant to their context.

WHY?

A social map serves as a valuable tool for cultivating a comprehensive understanding of diverse aspects of social reality, including demographics, settlement patterns, and social infrastructure. It goes beyond traditional surveys and interviews by uncovering cultural barriers, exposing the beliefs that uphold them, and highlighting bottlenecks that might escape detection through conventional methods. Through mapping, one can not only pinpoint the location of key resources and places but also delve into the reasons behind the accessibility or lack thereof for all community members. Additionally, Social Mapping provides insights into the organisational structure of institutions. The interactive and group-oriented nature of this method enhances engagement, allowing participants to actively steer the direction of discussions. Crucially, this tool facilitates the decentralisation of power and control in the data collection process. Social Mapping becomes a means for learners and community members to collaboratively investigate and represent the spatial dimensions of social issues within the built environment.

WITH WHOM?

The activity is initiated by educators and researchers, involving learners alongside a small group of community residents.

HOW?

To develop a social map, start by coordinating the time and place of the exercise with the local community, inviting their participation. Clearly explain the purpose to participants and encourage them to creatively depict notable physical features of their community using a variety of materials. During the process, maintain an observer role, taking careful note of the discussions without interfering. Monitor active participation and identify sectors of society that may be excluded, taking steps to include them. As a facilitator, intervene only when necessary, especially at difficult moments for participants. If you have additional information, wait for appropriate moments to share it or ask questions to stimulate discussion without interrupting the process. Once the map is completed, ask participants to identify their houses and ask for clarification on any unclear aspects. Verify the accuracy of the map with other community members. Finally, triangulate the information gathered with other local sources to gain an overall understanding. It becomes an experiential learning opportunity, connecting theoretical knowledge with lived realities to better prepare future architects for socially responsive practice.

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Socially Situated Research-Led Teaching



WHAT?

Research-led Teaching refers to an educational approach where teaching is closely linked to ongoing research activities, allowing learners to engage with and learn from the latest findings, methodologies, and theoretical advancements in a given field. In architectural design, this approach integrates cutting-edge research with design pedagogy, ensuring that learners not only learn the practical aspects of design but also develop critical thinking and investigative skills by engaging with contemporary architectural discourse, technologies, and challenges. When delivered as socially situated pedagogical practice, Research-led Teaching actively incorporates real-world social contexts, community engagement, and research-driven inquiry into the design studio or classroom, enabling learners to address societal challenges and consider the social, cultural, and ethical dimensions of architectural interventions. This approach ensures that teaching is not only informed by the latest research but also grounded in the social realities and challenges of communities, making learning relevant, impactful, and socially responsible.

WHY?

Research-led architectural design teaching involves embedding contemporary research themes, such as sustainability, digital fabrication, urban resilience, or computational design, into the curriculum. Learners work on design projects that tackle real-world problems, informed by the latest research in architecture, engineering, urban studies, and environmental science. In this approach, learners actively engage in research through activities such as site analyses, research-based design explorations, or collaborative projects aligned with the program's architectural research agenda. Research-led Teaching encourages learners to critically evaluate existing architectural theories, approaches, and practices, fostering a deeper understanding of the discipline's intellectual foundations. Students learn to position their design work within broader architectural debates, drawing on research to justify and critique design decisions. Moreover, learners experience a more holistic education where architectural theory is connected to practical design challenges. This equips them with the ability to engage critically with contemporary architectural problems and think beyond conventional design solutions. By engaging in research, learners enhance their abilities to analyse, interpret, and synthesise information. This skill set is essential not only in academic research but also in professional practice, where architects often conduct research to inform their projects. Additionally, Research-led Teaching ensures that learners are exposed to the forefront of architectural innovation, preparing them to tackle future challenges in the profession, such as sustainability, urbanisation, and technological advancements.

WITH WHOM?

The activity is facilitated by educators, involving learners in collaborative learning.

HOW?

Implementing Socially Situated Research-led Teaching involves structuring architectural education around real-world social contexts, ensuring learners engage meaningfully with societal challenges. Begin by defining socially relevant themes that frame design projects within pressing issues such as housing affordability, sustainability, urban regeneration, or social equity. Learners are encouraged to explore these themes through research, identifying the underlying social, cultural, and environmental dynamics that influence design decisions. Next, integrate community and stakeholder engagement directly into the learning process. Learners collaborate with community members, local organisations, or other stakeholders to co-create knowledge, developing design responses that are informed by lived experiences and diverse perspectives. This collaborative process emphasises the impact of architecture on real communities and encourages learners to situate their design work within tangible social realities. Reflective practice is embedded throughout, with learners maintaining journals or portfolios to document their research insights, learning progress, and the social implications of their design decisions. Interdisciplinary collaboration is actively fostered by involving experts from fields such as sociology, anthropology, environmental science, or urban planning. This broadens learners' understanding of complex social contexts and enriches their design thinking by exposing them to multiple lenses on societal issues. Digital tools and platforms are incorporated to extend the reach and impact of socially situated teaching. Learners may use virtual reality, GIS mapping, online collaborative platforms, or digital storytelling to conduct research, communicate findings, and gather feedback from communities. These methods enable learners to present design solutions in ways that are accessible, participatory, and sensitive to social contexts, further reinforcing architecture's role as a socially engaged practice.

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Sociogram



WHAT?

A Sociogram acts as a visual diagram of the dynamics within a specific group, shedding light on the intricate connections among its members. It functions as an empirical social research tool, offering a quantifiable perspective on the structures within the group and standing out as a noteworthy method in sociometry. This tool unveils the interplay among individuals in settings like school classrooms or conference groups, enabling the visualisation and mapping of both positive and negative relationships, as well as the prevailing affinities and conflicts among group members. By making visible the patterns of affiliation, communication, and exclusion, Sociograms provide valuable insights into how group dynamics influence collective processes. This makes them especially relevant for socially situated architectural pedagogies, where understanding group interaction, peer learning, and collaborative agency is essential. In design education settings, they can help instructors and learners reflect on how collaboration, inclusion, or marginalisation plays out in studio environments or community engagement projects. Two primary types exist: the egocentric sociogram, portraying all connections related to a specific case (the ego), often symbolised in the form of a star, and the network sociogram, illustrating a community of cases and their interrelations, even when physically separated.

WHY?

In the mid-20th century, social scientist Jacob L. Moreno pioneered the Sociogram as a quantitative approach to scrutinise social relationships within prisons and reform schools. His aim was to craft a sociometric tool that administrators could use to comprehend the impact of reciprocal and non-reciprocal communication patterns, status dynamics, alliances, and concealed agendas on a group's cohesiveness. The Sociogram serves as a valuable instrument for envisioning group interactions and interpersonal relationships. Its application extends to identifying significant issues within classrooms, social groups, shifts in group structures, and various dynamics among learners or team members. Beyond that, it establishes a groundwork for team coaching and even individual coaching.

WITH WHOM?

The activity is initiated by educators and researchers, involving learners alongside community residents, with the support of experts.

HOW?

To craft a Sociogram, follow these steps: First, determine the participants based on the specific issue the sociogram aims to address. Second, pose well-formulated questions that elicit clear expressions of affection or aversion. The informational value of a single sociogram, initially just a snapshot, is outweighed by the significance of multiple Sociograms recreated over time, allowing for an assessment of group developments. Questions like “whom would I like to have a casual talk with?” or “who can I count on in a delicate team situation?” guide this process. Third, proceed with evaluation using three discernible patterns in the results. Firstly, look for isolates—individuals not chosen or only chosen by other isolates. Ensuring their connection and support within the larger group is vital. Secondly, identify cliques—groups within a larger group where all members choose each other. Monitor to prevent exclusion of other individuals. Thirdly, recognise stars—individuals chosen frequently on the Sociogram, indicating popularity. However, conclusions from the evaluation should not solely rely on representation; additional interviews or participant interactions should complement the findings. By visualising interpersonal relationships, Sociograms contribute to a more socially responsive design pedagogy that values collaboration, empathy, and awareness of group dynamics. Caution is paramount, and marginalisation should be avoided.

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Stakeholder Analysis



WHAT?

A Stakeholder Analysis offers a way to identify key individuals or groups and understand their opinions regarding the proposed project. This process helps learners develop a more inclusive and socially responsive design approach. It encourages future architects to consider the broader social, cultural, and environmental implications of their designs from the earliest stages. Stakeholders extend beyond the primary audience and can include those who can support or challenge the project. When identifying stakeholders, it's crucial to include potentially marginalised communities like women, the elderly, youth, disabled individuals, and the economically disadvantaged. Ensuring their representation is essential, especially when the project has a significant impact on their lives.

WHY?

Assessing the extent of influence and interest each stakeholder holds regarding the project's pertinent issues or potential objectives is crucial. This assessment aids in recognising and comprehending the diverse stakeholders, each with varying levels of interest and ability to impact the project. It also considers their motivations and resources, knowledge, or skills that they can contribute to the matter at hand. Clear identification of these aspects simplifies the process of pinpointing problem causes and exploring potential solutions. Furthermore, this analysis provides valuable insights into the significance and impact of each stakeholder. This process equips architecture learners with tools to better understand the human and contextual dimensions that shape design outcomes. By practicing such evaluations, they learn to integrate stakeholder perspectives into the design process in a meaningful way. Armed with this information, it becomes feasible to craft a tailored approach and strategy specifically suited to the identified stakeholders.

WITH WHOM?

Community residents, social collectives, and service clubs take part together with educators and learners, supported by NGOs, researchers, donor organisations, government, and private and public institutions.

HOW?

All that is needed is a whiteboard, post-it notes and markers. Divide the participants into small working groups of 4-6 people and explain the three-step activity. First, start brainstorming with the group to identify key stakeholders. In the second stage, assess the influence and importance of each stakeholder using an Importance/Influence Matrix. The whole group collaborates to rank the stakeholders in a table according to their influence and importance. Consensus is reached by assigning influence and importance scores using a five-point scale, where 1 means very little importance or influence, and 5 means very significant importance or influence. Transfer these scores from the influence and importance table to the matrix. Once the Importance versus Influence Matrix has been completed, it is clear that the ideal stakeholders have both a strong influence and a strong interest in the project's objectives. This activity provides learners with a hands-on method to evaluate real-world dynamics within communities and user groups. It also helps them develop collaborative and analytical skills essential for participatory and inclusive design. In the final stage, it is crucial to identify potential risks that could affect the design of the activity.

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Stakeholder Journey Mapping



WHAT?

Stakeholder Journey Mapping was firstly utilised in for-profit ventures, going beyond the conventional customer-focused approach by incorporating all pertinent stakeholder groups that influence the success of a new project. In architecture, this method is reoriented to centre not only institutional stakeholders but also community members, local actors, and cultural networks that shape and are shaped by spatial practices. Utilising Stakeholder Personas, it simplifies research and insight generation, especially for entrepreneurs and researchers dealing with time constraints, limited funding, and constrained travel opportunities in the early stages of development. When applied in design education and community-engaged research, these personas become tools for empathic learning and inclusive design exploration. This method offers a clear and structured representation of a service stakeholder's experience, utilising touchpoints where users engage with the service, space, or environment to weave an engaging narrative based on their interactions. This narrative delves into their service experiences and the accompanying emotions in an easily digestible manner.

WHY?

A Stakeholder Journey Map incorporates diverse personas, illustrating how various target groups perceive the same path. This diversity is essential for surfacing how spatial experiences are shaped by culture, identity, history, and power. It can zoom in on a specific user segment, showcasing their tendencies or challenges they might encounter along the way. Additionally, it highlights how these obstacles could influence their perceptions of the service, space or environment. The visual aspect of Journey Mapping encourages active engagement and attentive listening within a diverse group, accommodating members with different strengths, weaknesses, and communication preferences. By fostering mutual recognition across stakeholder perspectives, the method supports inclusive design dialogues rooted in empathy and contextual awareness. Moreover, creating visual representations fosters creativity and out-of-the-box thinking among participants, fostering constructive dialogue and debate.

WITH WHOM?

The activity is led by educators and researchers, involving learners in collaboration with community residents, social collectives, and service clubs, and supported by donor organisations and private and public institutions.

HOW?

Recognising the points of interaction between users and the service, space, or environment is essential. These interactions can vary widely, ranging from face-to-face encounters to virtual interactions online or physical visits to a location. Creating a customer Journey Map involves identifying these touchpoints by gathering insights from users. While interviews are effective for this purpose, customers themselves can document these maps through mediums like blogs and video diaries, offering valuable insights in their own words. Once these touchpoints are pinpointed, they are interconnected to create a visual representation of the overall experience. This overview should be visually appealing for easy comprehension by everyone involved, yet detailed enough to provide genuine insights into the depicted journeys. One approach is to base the map on personas, transforming the users from mere names on a page into vivid characters. Alternatively, incorporating materials produced by customers themselves enhances empathetic engagement, crucial for conveying the diverse emotions inherent in most journeys. Grounding the map in user insights allows it to encompass both formal and informal touchpoints. Adding a personal touch, such as incorporating photographs, along with personal quotes and commentary, can create an even more immersive and user-focused experience.

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Timeline



WHAT?

Timelines serve as dynamic chronicles that capture the sequence of events related to a particular topic, be it an individual, a specific time period or a particular place. The versatility of Timelines is evident in that they can be produced in a variety of ways, highlighting different themes and presented in a variety of formats. By delving into people's lives, Timelines can take shape around significant life events or collected documents, seamlessly weaving historical context with personal accounts. Timelines can be used to contextualise spatial histories, personal migration journeys, or community-led development processes. From the use of sophisticated genealogy software, standard word processing or spreadsheet applications, specialised timeline programmes or websites, to the charm of traditional pen and paper, the options for creating timelines are as varied as the stories they tell.

WHY?

Timelines help to assist individuals or small groups in constructing a historical narrative, pinpointing important moments when their utilisation or access to land and natural resources underwent changes. These Timelines can encompass broad trends with approximate dates or delve into specific events. It's important to note that some "events" unfold over several years, while others may be tied to a specific year, month, or day. Timelines prove invaluable in narrating the evolution of changes over time, showcasing significant historical events, or outlining the sequence of steps in a current or planned activity. They facilitate the identification of correlations between different activities and highlight periods within a given year where potential competition for labour or resources may arise. Timelines enable learners to critically engage with the socio-environmental histories of sites, fostering awareness of how social dynamics impact spatial development. This approach situates design interventions within broader temporal contexts, encouraging reflective practice that respects community narratives and resource relationships.

WITH WHOM?

Educators and researchers lead the initiative, engaging learners alongside community residents, service clubs, and social collectives, with support from NGOs, government, donor organisations, and private and public institutions.

HOW?

Constructing a Timeline offers diverse methods, with a simple approach often providing adequate for analysis. While numerous software and online platforms cater to Timeline creation, the following steps delineate a hands-on method for collaborative group work without the aid of digital tools. First and foremost, define the topic. Next, acquire a lengthy piece of paper; it does not have to be thick but should be sufficiently long. You can use multiple sheets of flipchart paper connected end-to-end. The left end of the Timeline designates an agreed-upon start date for the community's narrative, while the right end signifies anticipated future events (or simply now). Following this, invite participants to contribute one or two milestones in between, acting as additional reference points on the Timeline if necessary. Then, prompt each participant to recall a pivotal moment relevant to the topic. Record or illustrate it on a card, including pertinent details on the back or a flip chart, such as the date, positive and negative aspects, key parties involved, actions taken, etc. Proceed to discuss each moment card, placing it in the appropriate position on the Timeline. Repeat this process until the group has reviewed all key changes, historical events, or pertinent steps, arranging them chronologically. To streamline the narrative, position minor moments under the cards representing major events occurring in the same time period. Lastly, review the outcome, searching for trends or patterns in the story. Identify actions pertinent to the present based on lessons learned from the past.

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Transect Walk



WHAT?

A Transect Walk serves as a tool wherein participants walk along predetermined routes or areas within the community, gathering spatial information encompassing geographic features, land use details, vegetation strips, social aspects, and more. An integral aspect of this exercise involves discussion, active listening, and the identification of problems along with potential solutions. During these walks, community members, planners, and municipality representatives engage in a participatory exercise, interviewing passers-by and drawing diagrams that capture observations of characteristics, risks, and existing solutions. This tool allows architecture learners and participants to directly engage with place-based knowledge and community insight, fostering experiential learning through real-time observation and dialogue. Conducted during the initial phase of fieldwork, the information gathered during the Transect Walk is used to construct a diagram or map that becomes the basis for further discussions among participants.

WHY?

Transect Walks provide an idea of the actual ground situation by recording it in sections (transects) to create diagrams. Ideally, these walks foster a mutual exchange of knowledge between researchers and local residents. The strong visual and experiential focus of the exercise supports a deeper grasp of spatial, social, and environmental concerns, making it an effective entry point for context-sensitive neighbourhood or urban projects. When integrated into architectural education, Transect Walks enable learners to learn directly from communities, developing observational, analytical, and empathetic skills critical to participatory design. Participants engage in discussions during the walk, addressing anything encountered or observed that may be relevant. Team members can also conduct informal interviews with individuals encountered during the walk, gathering their perspectives on the visible resources and land use in that area. Additionally, Transect Walks enable the comparison of reactions and discussions among different stakeholders, including government officials, NGO team members, and the local community.

WITH WHOM?

The activity is initiated by educators and researchers, involving learners alongside community residents, with the support of experts.

HOW?

A Transect Walk requires little preparation, as it consists of drawing up a simple list of observations and questions for each stop, securing a local guide for the trip and determining the route. Typically, the route is followed to its conclusion, with regular stops for observation. The time required is usually an hour or less, depending on the walk's length and the study's focus. Transect Walks can be embedded in field-based studio learning to help learners observe and interpret local conditions with the community's input. To conduct a Transect Walk, follow these steps: First, identify a group of key informants that ideally includes all pertinent stakeholder groups willing to cover some distance and share their observations. Second, discuss the walk's purpose with participants and decide on the route. While maps or aerial photographs may be useful, they are not essential. For evaluation purposes, ensure the Transect Walk's route can be easily retraced. Third, collaborate with key informants to determine the parameters for recording observations, exploring local definitions of these parameters. It is advisable to limit the parameters to five or six at most to avoid information overload. Fourth, while the walk and the discussions that arise during it with local experts are the most engaging aspects of transect walks, documenting them afterward can be challenging. To facilitate this, clearly designate specific observation points along the transect walk where everyone stops to record all parameters. Document contrasts, changes, and create a diagram summarising the collected information. This method supports spatial literacy by encouraging learners to engage with multiple local viewpoints and document built and unbuilt environments through collaborative fieldwork.

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VIPP—Visualization in Participatory Programs or Card Clustering



WHAT?

VIPP is a visualisation method designed to gather information and feedback from participants and peers. It involves the use of numerous multi-coloured paper cards in various shapes and sizes. Participants express their main ideas on these cards using large letters or drawings visible to the entire group. This method allows each team member to understand the perspectives of others on specific issues, topics, or talking points. VIPP can be used to capture diverse user perceptions of space, encouraging collaborative reflection on spatial qualities, needs, and possibilities. By tapping into these diverse viewpoints, this approach creates a synergistic environment, fostering the generation of a wealth of insights.

WHY?

VIPP, or the Visualisation Method, enhances idea development within a team setting and broadens individuals' perspectives by exposing them to a diverse range of views, issues, and opinions. This method fosters a more collaborative environment, stimulating discussions and reflection through visual incentives. Its purpose is to support participatory design processes, empowering communities to contribute meaningfully to spatial decision-making at various scales. By encouraging dialogue and interaction, it facilitates local decision-making on development actions. Through this method, consensus-building becomes a collective effort, ensuring active participation from everyone. Participants who are less vocal are afforded a channel for expression, while those who typically dominate discussions relinquish control, thus enabling others to voice their opinions.

WITH WHOM?

The tool brings together learners and educators with social collectives and service clubs, supported by NGOs and researchers, and strengthened through partnerships with government, donor organisations, and media members.

HOW?

VIPP is suitable for medium-sized groups consisting of 14 to 20 individuals. To implement VIPP, certain tools are required, including a board, sticky notes, cards of various sizes and shapes, stickers and markers. The primary steps in the process are: The facilitator introduces the talking point and distributes three cards to each participant. Individuals jot down their ideas on the cards and then display them on a visible surface. The facilitator reads aloud each card, and participants engage in discussions, expressing their thoughts and viewpoints. These cards can capture ideas about spatial experiences, environmental concerns, or design preferences, which are then grouped by common themes to guide participatory design processes. Lastly, each cluster of cards is labelled, prompting a deeper exploration of the ideas within the group.

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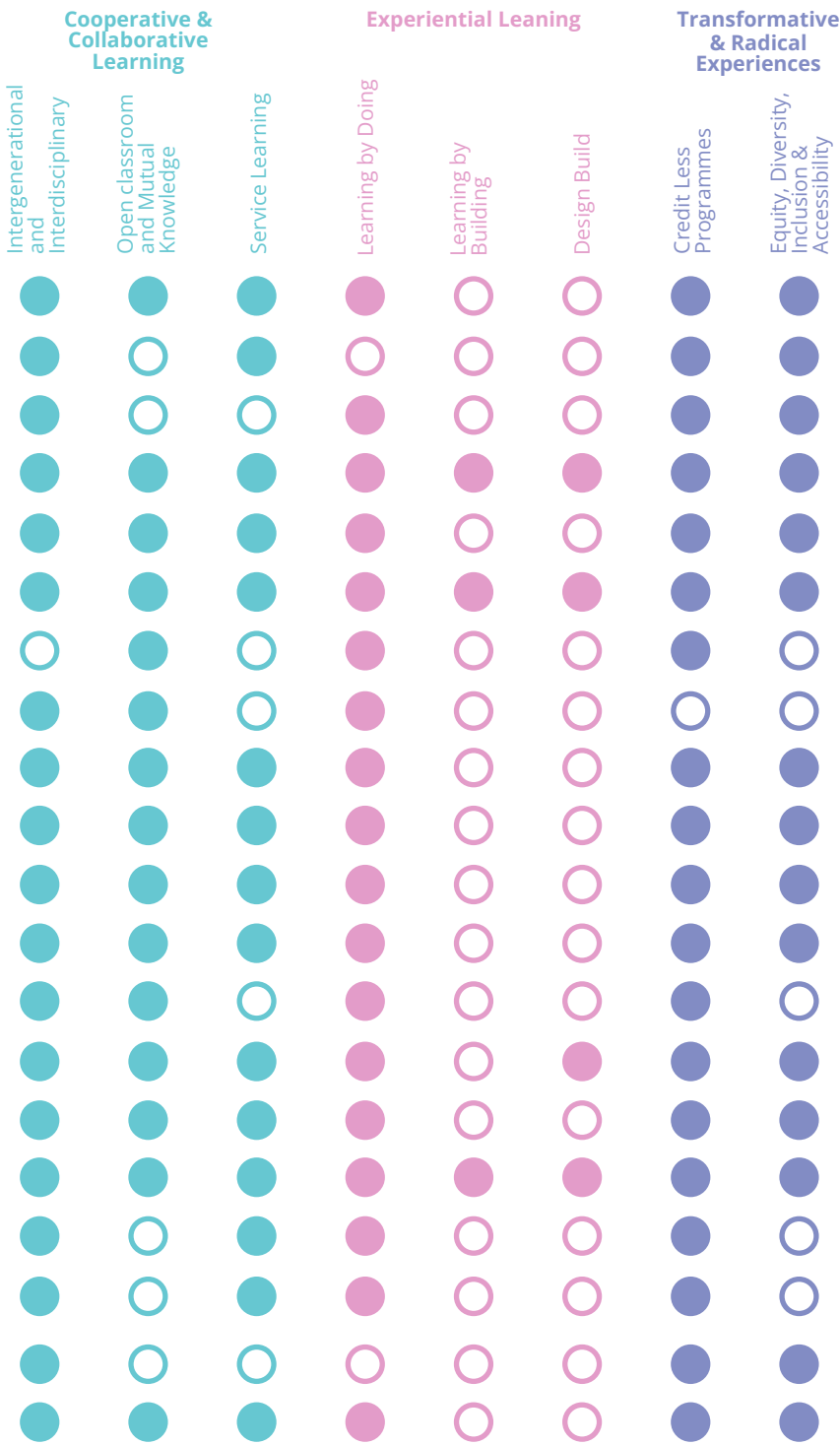
IDEATION STAGE

Prioritising and Analysing

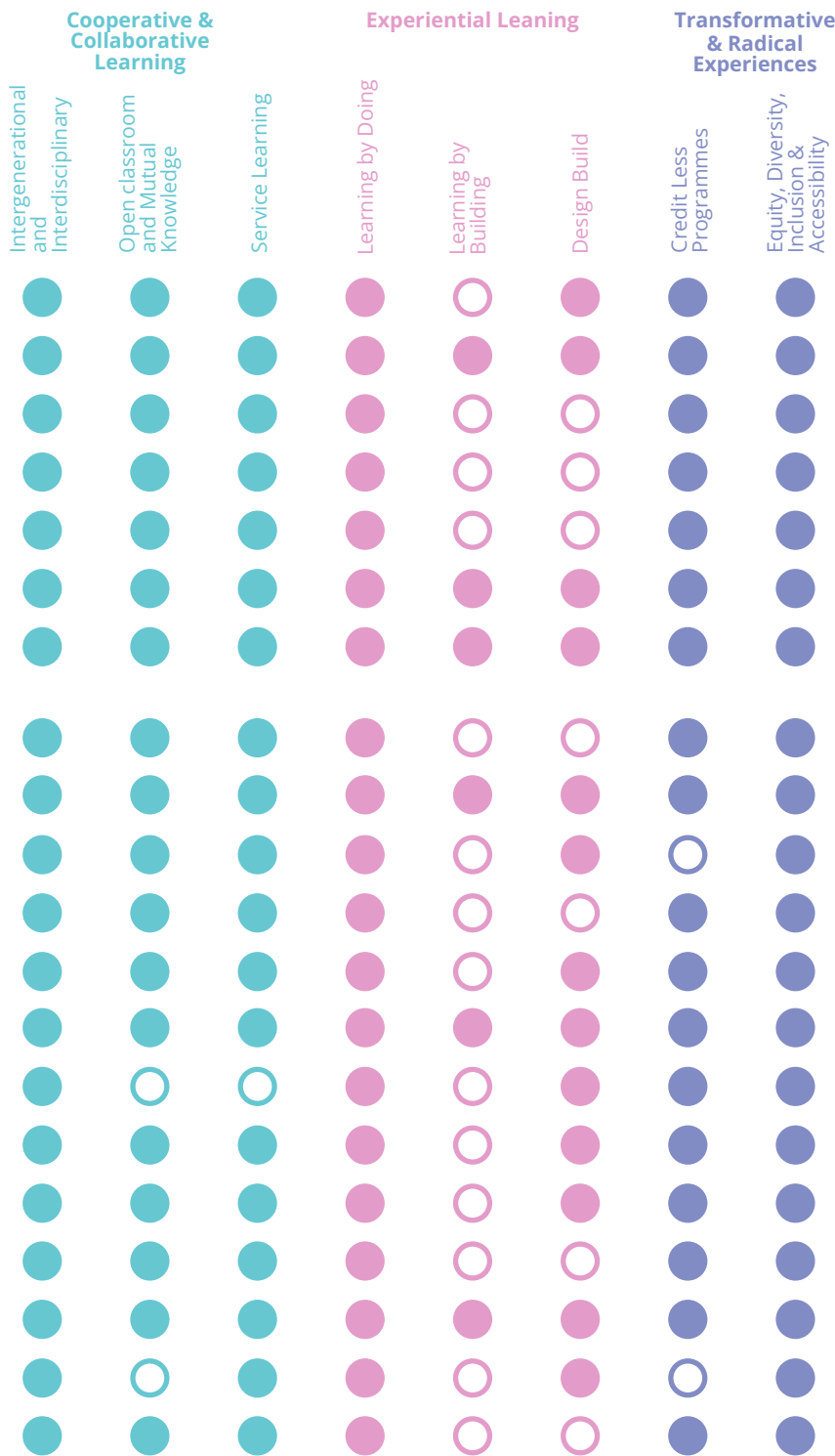
Problem Solving
Analyse Problems
Experiment
Engage
Reaffirm User Needs
Refresh Solutions

INDEX BY CATEGORIES AND SUBCATEGORIES

Affinity Diagram or the KJ Method	104
Affordances	106
Biographical Method	108
Brainstorming	110
Brainwriting	112
Bruno Munari Method	114
Concept Mapping	116
Conceptual Framework	118
Critical Thinking Mindset	120
Design Charrettes	122
Design Games	124
Dilemma-driven Design	126
Draw (how to make) Toast	128
Empathy Mapping	130
Fishbone Diagram or Ishikawa Diagram	132
Five Whys	134
Flow Exercise	136
How Might We	138
Life Road Maps	140
Livingston Design Method	142



Mind Maps	144
Phillips 66	146
Photo Walk	148
Planning Cell	150
Problem Tree Analysis	152
Quick Voting Tools: Dot Voting and Barometers	154
Scenario Analysis	156
SCAMPER (Substitute, Combine, Adapt, Modify, Put to Another Use, Eliminate and Rearrange)	158
Sequential Embedded Experimental Method	160
Situated and Critical Storytelling in Design Studio	162
Six Thinking Hats	164
Speed Dating Design Method	166
Stokes	168
Storyboarding	170
Storytelling	172
SWOT Analysis	174
System Mapping	176
Synectics	178
Value Proposition Canvas	180
World Café	182



Affinity Diagram or the KJ Method



WHAT?

The KJ Method, named after its creator, the Japanese anthropologist Jiro Kawakita, serves as a method for both generating and prioritising ideas. Widely adopted in design, team, and project meetings, this method involves organising a plethora of ideas, actions, and data according to their inherent connections. It proves valuable in the process of generating, organising, and consolidating information pertinent to a given process or problem. Following the idea generation phase, the method suggests grouping concepts based on their affinity or similarity. In architectural education and design practice, the KJ Method helps learners and design teams cluster design ideas, user requirements, or spatial observations, revealing patterns and guiding the prioritisation of design solutions in studio projects or urban interventions.

WHY?

This approach facilitates the sorting of extensive sets of ideas or data, typically stemming from brainstorming sessions, into distinct groups for thorough review and analysis. Moreover, it is frequently employed to systematically organise and analyse notes, insights, and verbal data collected during field interviews and surveys. The KJ Diagram proves particularly useful in achieving group consensus, especially in situations where there is an overwhelming amount of seemingly chaotic facts and ideas, or when dealing with issues or problems of considerable size and complexity. Ultimately, this process allows a team to transcend its habitual thought patterns and preconceived categories, providing a means to tap into the vast knowledge and understanding that resides in our intuition. In architectural education, the KJ Method supports socially situated studio work by enabling learners to collectively synthesise observations from site visits, user engagement, and community interactions, fostering design decisions grounded in shared understanding and contextual insight.

WITH WHOM?

Educators and researchers guide the process, connecting learners with community residents, social collectives, and experts.

HOW?

These diagrams typically involve 40 to 60 items, although you can work with 100 to 200 items if necessary. It is recommended to have at least 5 participants for effective idea generation. To implement this method, you will need sticky notes or cards, markers, and a spacious surface like a wall, table, or floor. Begin by sharing and recording ideas on sticky notes or cards during a brainstorming session. Spread these notes on a large surface, keeping the ideas brief and focused. Next, have team members simultaneously group related notes, creating clusters and seeking connections between individual ideas. This step involves creating 5 to 10 groups of notes, allowing for the presence of “loners” and permitting the movement of notes that have already been placed. Silence is encouraged during this phase. Following the grouping, initiate a discussion with the team to define categories or header cards for each group. Explore the shape of the chart, identify surprising patterns, and discuss reasons for moving controversial notes. Identify a representative note or create a descriptor as a header for each grouping. Subsequently, combine groups into new supergroups and facilitate a voting process to reach a consensus. The assignment should be based on intuition rather than extensive contemplation. Use dots to vote for the best ideas in each group, resulting in clear winners. Conclude the process with a discussion about the insights gained from the activity. In studio settings, learners can map spatial qualities, user needs, or precedent strategies into clusters that reveal hidden design directions. In practice, affinity diagrams can be deployed in participatory workshops where residents, designers, and policymakers each contribute observations about a site or building, later rearranged into themes like safety, accessibility, or atmosphere.

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Affordances



WHAT?

The term “affordances” refers to the possibilities for action that an environment or object offers to individuals, depending on their abilities and intentions. This concept, derived from the work of psychologist James J. Gibson (1979), can also be applied to physical spaces and learning processes, particularly in an architectural design studio. Learners, through physical and social interactions within the studio, perceive and utilise these affordances to engage in learning and creative activities, connecting with the space, tools, and collaborative processes. Affordances manifest not only in the physical layout but also in how people inhabit, use, and adapt the space. Recent developments in architectural education identify several key categories of studio Affordances: spatial flexibility, allowing the rearrangement of furniture to support group work, presentations, or critiques; interactive surfaces, such as walls for pin-ups and iterative design feedback; and digital integration, which affords hybrid workflows, enabling learners to transition between manual and digital design processes while promoting inclusivity and participation.

WHY?

The importance of studying Affordances in an architectural studio lies in their direct impact on the quality of learning and the creative design process. Affordances emerge from the interaction between learners and the design studio environment, influencing not only the effectiveness of social interactions, feedback, and studio activities but also the negotiation and presentation of projects. Studying these dynamics aims to: Enhance the quality of learning and the creative design process through the interaction between learners and the studio environment; foster the development of processes involving collaborative interactions (peer-to-peer); improve the effectiveness of social interactions, feedback, and studio activities, as well as the negotiation and presentation of projects; create spaces that encourage confrontation and dialogue, key elements in shaping learners capable of addressing real-world challenges.

WITH WHOM?

Educators and researchers lead the initiative, engaging learners in collaboration with educational institutions, social collectives, community residents, and other institutions.

HOW?

Affordances in architectural studios shape how learners engage with design, collaborate, and learn. To implement this, first define the pedagogical objectives of the studio, clarifying whether the focus is on individual work, group projects, presentations, or engagement with external participants. Organise the workspace in alignment with these objectives. For instance, arrange desks along the walls in a checkerboard pattern to allow learners to work individually while using the walls to display sketches, diagrams, and concepts. This setup encourages both personal focus and peer observation. A large central table can host group presentations and horizontal critiques, facilitating discussion among learners and educators alike. The central table also allows for engagement with external stakeholders, such as local experts, community members, or collaborators from other disciplines, providing opportunities to exchange situated knowledge about the environment and ongoing projects. Desk critiques and presentation moments should be designed to enable simultaneous observation, feedback, and discussion, fostering rich interaction. The walls and surfaces of the studio can be curated to display outputs from both learners and external participants, integrating multiple perspectives into the learning environment. The studio space should also support dialogue beyond specific projects, encouraging reflection on broader ethical, social, and environmental implications of design. Finally, continuously observe how the physical and social arrangement of the studio influences learning and collaboration, adapting the layout and practices to enhance engagement, creativity, and inclusion.

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Biographical Method



WHAT?

The Biographical Method incorporates narratives that span an entire life or specific biographical stages or events relevant to the individual under examination. It includes all available information or documents related to the subject's life, with the aim of understanding and analysing their perception of social reality. This method can reveal how personal experiences and spatial memories shape people's relationships with the built environment. The research uses autobiographical documents, letters, diaries, interviews or other sources, presenting these stories in various forms, such as edited versions, written expressions, visual representations or oral presentations. It encourages learners to see space not only as a physical entity but as a lived, emotional, and historical experience.

WHY?

Biography represents an actively constructive process, involving the selection of a hero or heroine, the exploration of data sets, the identification of key issues and themes, and ultimately the creation of a final image or portrait. This methodology promotes a universalist and inclusive approach, encouraging the understanding and interpretation of experiences that transcend national, cultural and traditional boundaries. This broader perspective aims to enhance our understanding of individual actions and social engagement. Biographical inquiry allows learners to uncover how personal and collective life histories shape spatial imaginaries, access to the built environment, and architectural identity. In academic disciplines such as critical pedagogy, cultural studies, critical race theory, decolonising research or feminisms, Biographical Methods have found wide application. These diverse fields collectively search for meanings and narratives in individual biographies to both affirm and challenge existing understandings of the dynamics of social processes and relations over time and in different contexts. Within architectural pedagogy, this approach has been used to investigate the lives of women architects who have been historically excluded from the discipline's narrative.

WITH WHOM?

Educators and researchers guide the process, connecting learners with experts.

HOW?

Firstly, choose your subject and formulate your research questions. What is already known about the individual? How much information are you seeking? What is the person's profession or notoriety? How widely recognised are they? Does the person's nationality, ethnic background, gender, or affiliations hold significance? Are they alive or deceased? Which dates are crucial to this person? Do you desire autobiographical, memoir, or interview materials in addition to biographical sources? Secondly, compile primary sources, encompassing materials generated during the period under study—examples include letters, diaries, interviews, autobiographies, and official documents. Seek out personal writings and documents associated with the individual. Thirdly, delve into secondary sources, as they furnish interpretations and analyses of primary materials. Refer to biographies, articles, and scholarly works to gain a broader understanding and context. Fourthly, explore libraries and archives, as they serve as invaluable reservoirs of primary materials. Many institutions house dedicated collections or archives pertaining to specific individuals, featuring personal letters, photographs, and other artefacts. Fifthly, search through online databases and digital archives, some of which have digitised their collections for online accessibility. Sixthly, if feasible, conduct interviews—particularly if the individual is alive or if access to those who knew them is possible. Interviews can provide invaluable insights, capturing personal experiences and perspectives. These interviews may serve to reconstruct spatial experiences, daily routines, and place-based memories that are often absent from formal architectural narratives. Seventhly, engage in document analysis—systematically scrutinise the gathered documents and sources. Identify patterns, themes, and key events in the person's life, taking into account the historical and cultural context. This can help learners interrogate how biography intersects with spatial practices and institutional exclusions, contributing to a critical pedagogy of architecture. Finally, be mindful of ethical considerations, especially when dealing with living individuals or sensitive information. Organise and write following a coherent structure, ensuring proper citation of sources. If possible, subject your work to review by peers or experts in the field to ensure accuracy and validity.

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Brainstorming



WHAT?

Brainstorming stands as a valuable qualitative research tool, fostering a collaborative environment where participants generate a wealth of fresh and creative ideas. Embraced by design teams, it provides the freedom to explore ideas in various directions. It can serve as a platform to uncover local knowledge and lived experiences, helping learners co-develop ideas with communities rather than designing for them. Through Brainstorming, teams can explore a wide range of approaches and pinpoint the most compelling and essential ideas to shape their design process. By inviting multiple voices into the conversation, Brainstorming becomes a space for deconstructing power dynamics and highlighting social equity in architectural design.

WHY?

Utilising Brainstorming proves to be a powerful strategy for generating a wealth of potential ideas and identifying key concepts for further exploration. It promotes a collective understanding of the various opportunities linked to a specific topic. The involvement of multiple participants ensures the swift generation of diverse ideas, fostering a dynamic atmosphere for creative problem-solving. This collaborative approach also empowers participants to express their thoughts openly and freely. By engaging with diverse stakeholders—learners, users, or community members—architectural learners develop a deeper awareness of the spatial, cultural, and social dimensions of the built environment. As a result, the team not only gains valuable insights but also uncovers the hidden needs and motivations of stakeholders, enhancing the overall depth of understanding.

WITH WHOM?

Educators and researchers lead the initiative, engaging learners alongside community residents, service clubs, and social collectives, with support from NGOs, government, donor organisations, and private and public institutions.

HOW?

In a Brainstorming a facilitator plays a key role in structuring group sessions and ensuring a vibrant discussion. To ensure a successful session, it is advisable to limit the number of participants to no more than 12 people for durations exceeding an hour. It is also crucial to involve individuals with diverse skills and perspectives. Facilitators emphasise including community members, users, and learners from varied backgrounds to enrich the dialogue with lived experiences and contextual knowledge. The process often begins with participants collecting their thoughts individually, followed by sharing and building upon each other's ideas, thereby generating a wide array of possibilities. In the final phase of Brainstorming, the focus usually shifts to clustering, analysing, and prioritising the various ideas. The aim is to identify the most promising solutions or directions and define the subsequent steps. To conduct an effective session, adhere to these tips: set a time limit, start with a specific problem, foster an environment free of criticism, encourage unconventional ideas, prioritise quality, collaborate by building on others' ideas, utilise visual tools, and ensure one conversation takes place at a time.

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Brainwriting



WHAT?

Brainwriting is a method for generating ideas and solutions to a given problem. Participants engage individually and silently, writing down their thoughts on pieces of paper, which can be set aside or passed to the next contributor. This approach produces a greater quantity and diversity of ideas compared to Brainstorming, although it tends to be quieter and more reflective, generating less energy. It is particularly effective when dealing with complex ideas, when diversity is crucial, for empowering less extroverted participants, or when the group size makes traditional brainstorming impractical. In architectural pedagogy and design practice, Brainwriting can be used to explore multiple design alternatives, generate creative solutions for spatial challenges, and encourage contributions from all learners or team members, ensuring a wider diversity of perspectives in the design process.

WHY?

Its practicality lies in the absence of discussion during the initial idea generation rounds, enabling the rapid generation of numerous ideas. Every group member enjoys an equal opportunity to contribute their ideas for consideration. The anonymity of the process enhances its utility, fostering a greater freedom for genuine creativity, as participants are unaware of who proposed which ideas. This liberates individuals to suggest solutions they might have considered too unconventional or believed would not be well-received. Moreover, the exchange of papers facilitates the evaluation and building upon others' ideas in a focused and creative manner. In architectural pedagogy and practice, brainwriting can foster socially inclusive and participatory design thinking.

WITH WHOM?

The activity is initiated by educators and researchers, involving learners alongside community residents, with the support of experts.

HOW?

In the Brainwriting process, start by evaluating your ideation starting point, incorporating relevant prior knowledge. Second, ensure collaboration with a diverse set of individuals, including those familiar with the background and experts. Third, seat group members at a table, providing each person with a sheet of paper. Instruct them to write down the problem everyone aims to solve. Moving on to the fourth step, allocate three minutes for each participant to generate three ideas for solving the problem. Emphasise that ideas should be written in “free form” without editing or perfection. Silence and individual work are essential. For the fifth step, transition to round two. Collect and shuffle the papers, then redistribute them. Prompt participants to generate three additional ideas on the new paper they receive, allowing them to build on existing ideas or propose new solutions. Upon completion of all rounds, gather the papers and transcribe all ideas onto a whiteboard. Group the ideas based on the team’s preferred criteria, facilitating discussions or initiating a selection process. The moderator determines the number of rounds in this Brainwriting exercise. In the context of architectural pedagogy, learners not only explore creative solutions but also critically reflect on how their proposals impact diverse stakeholders, fostering inclusivity and amplifying underrepresented voices within collaborative design exercises.

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Bruno Munari Method



WHAT?

The Metodo Bruno Munari® stands as a patented educational teaching method. Devised by Munari, it is rooted in the belief that anyone can be creative and design effectively given the appropriate tools. In his book *Da Cosa Nasce Cosa* or *Out of One Thing Comes Another*, Munari outlines his design method systematically. When applied to socially situated architecture, the method encourages learners to critically examine the socio-cultural contexts that shape both problems and solutions. Rather than focusing solely on aesthetics or functionality, the method supports an inquiry into power relations, environmental ethics, and community needs as central elements in the design process. It promotes not just creativity, but also a reflective and inclusive mindset, empowering learners to engage with complexity and social responsibility from the outset.

WHY?

This problem-solving approach in design emphasises avoiding reinventing solutions for every project and instead proposes a systematic problem-solving process. The method involves a series of essential steps, organised logically based on experience, with the goal of achieving maximum results with minimal effort. In design, it is considered incorrect to approach a project without a method, relying solely on immediate artistic inspiration without conducting a preliminary study. This study should involve understanding past work in the field, materials to be used, and the precise function of the design. When teaching architecture with a focus on social context, the method also encourages learners to research and reflect on the historical, cultural, and political forces that shape built environments. The operations of this method adhere to objective values, serving as practical tools for creative designers. These methodical rules do not block the personality of the designer; rather, they inspire the designer to discover innovative solutions that are both ethically grounded and socially responsive, and that could benefit others in the future.

WITH WHOM?

Researchers and educators lead the initiative, engaging learners and clients alongside community residents, service clubs, and social collectives, with support from NGOs, government, donor organisations, and private and public institutions.

HOW?

The Bruno Munari Method follows a structured process consisting of distinct stages. It begins with identifying the problem at hand, whether it's functional, ergonomic, or emotional in nature. Designers then step back in the problem definition stage, refraining from proposing solutions and focusing solely on understanding the problem deeply. This stage also involves recognising the cultural, historical, and socio-political dimensions that shape the built environment. The next step involves breaking down the problem into smaller components, facilitating easier resolution. Subsequently, extensive research and data collection are conducted, delving into market analysis, studying competitors, examining components, and exploring existing solutions. This collected data is then meticulously analysed to draw meaningful insights. In educational contexts, learners are encouraged to integrate community voices and local knowledge into this analysis, ensuring their design work is grounded in real-world contexts. With a clear understanding of the problem, designers enter the creativity phase. Here, solutions are proposed, keeping in mind the technical and rational aspects of the project. It's crucial to avoid mere abstract ideas and ground the proposals in practicality. Materials and technologies are then carefully considered. Designers contemplate the most suitable materials and manufacturing technologies for the solution. Experimentation becomes paramount, involving testing different materials and technologies, including innovative approaches. Prototyping follows, with each iteration refining the solution based on experimental outcomes. Once refined, prototypes are presented to users during the testing phase. Observing user reactions is essential, often recorded for future reference. Technical drawings are then generated, translating the design into detailed technical plans that manufacturers can follow accurately. Finally, the solution is presented comprehensively, effectively communicating the finalised design to all stakeholders involved in the project.

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Concept Mapping



WHAT?

Concept Maps serve as visual instruments for arranging and illustrating knowledge. They consist of concepts, typically enclosed within circles or boxes, and connections between these concepts represented by connecting lines. The words on these lines, known as linking words or phrases, define the relationship between the paired concepts. In the majority of concept maps, ideas are presented as boxes or circles, organised hierarchically, and linked with lines or arrows. These lines are annotated with linking words and phrases to show the relationships between the concepts. In architectural pedagogy and practice, Concept Mapping can be used to visually organise design ideas, explore relationships between spatial elements, and clarify connections between user needs, programmatic requirements, and design strategies, supporting both individual and collaborative design processes.

WHY?

Visualising relationships between different concepts aids in comprehending complex subjects and serves as a valuable tool for assessing one's understanding. This graphical depiction is widely employed to encapsulate a grasp of a subject, whether for professional, academic, or personal study, with academia being its most prevalent domain of use. Additionally, the process of contemplating and visually presenting connections between ideas fosters mental associations, contributing to enhanced knowledge retention. Mapping out intricate relationships between concepts is particularly beneficial for designers and developers, enabling them to discern patterns, address creative challenges, and identify gaps in understanding. Furthermore, this approach encourages the exploration of new concepts and their interconnections, igniting creativity. Ultimately, it serves to pinpoint areas that need further knowledge.

WITH WHOM?

Educators and researchers guide the process, connecting learners with experts.

HOW?

To construct a Concept Map, follow these sequential steps: Initially, pinpoint your focus question, defining it as a research query or a societal concern. Identify the core concept that encapsulates the problem or topic you aim to address. Second, engage in brainstorming, delineating related concepts or ideas (nodes) with concise wording. Third, start building the map by situating your central concept at the top or centre, ensuring a clear hierarchical structure. Fourth, establish connections between ideas, starting with broader concepts and progressively linking them to more specific ones; incorporate contextual link words. Fifth, review and refine the map, seeking potential improvements, eliminating repetitions, and addressing any overlooked ideas. Feel free to rearrange nodes or introduce additional cross-links as necessary. Sixth, tailor the map, especially if you intend to share or present it to external stakeholders; ensure a polished appearance. Seventh, iterate as needed, accommodating adjustments and revisions based on new research and insights. It is crucial to note that you have two primary options for creating your Concept Map: traditional tools such as pen and paper, cards, sticky notes, or a whiteboard; or a digital concept mapping application. In architectural education, Concept Mapping can be employed to visualise socially situated design challenges, linking spatial, cultural, and community-based factors. By mapping these interdependencies, learners develop a more holistic understanding of architectural problems and the diverse stakeholders involved.

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Conceptual Framework



WHAT?

A Conceptual Framework comprises an interconnected system of concepts, which work collaboratively to provide a clear understanding of a phenomenon or phenomena. The concepts within a Conceptual Framework reinforce each other, articulate their respective phenomena, and establish a philosophy specific to the framework. Drawing upon established theories, models, or bodies of knowledge, a Conceptual Framework structures the understanding of a research problem. It outlines the research scope, identifies pertinent variables, formulates research questions, and guides the selection of suitable methodologies and data analysis techniques. Usually elaborated from theory, the relationships within the framework are often represented visually through formats such as flowcharts, network diagrams or other schemes. Applied to architecture and design education, Conceptual Frameworks help learners and researchers organise design concepts, understand complex spatial relationships, and connect theoretical knowledge with practical design strategies in a coherent and structured manner.

WHY?

Constructing a Conceptual Framework compels you to articulate explicitly the objectives of your academic research. It facilitates a selective process, aiding in the identification of crucial features and determining the relationships likely to hold significance or meaning. Consequently, it guides decisions about the collection and analysis of data. Unlike quantitative models that offer theoretical explanations, Conceptual Frameworks contribute to an understanding and interpretative approach toward social reality. Furthermore, they assist readers in comprehending the research design, interpreting the utilised data, and the investigation's outcomes. Finally, a Conceptual Framework is useful to highlight the innovative aspects of your work and effectively communicates the essence of your project in a clear and visual manner. In architecture, developing a conceptual framework not only strengthens methodological rigour but also serves as a design-thinking device, enabling practitioners and learners to connect abstract ideas with spatial and material strategies.

WITH WHOM?

Educators and researchers guide the process, connecting learners with experts.

HOW?

Develop a Conceptual Framework through the following phases. In the initial stage, chart the chosen data sources and explore a range of multidisciplinary literature related to the phenomenon in question. This involves identifying various text types and additional data sources such as existing empirical data and practices. In the second phase, thoroughly read and categorise the selected data, considering both discipline-specific and hierarchical importance within each discipline. This approach enhances the efficiency of the inquiry. Moving on to the third phase, pinpoint and define key concepts by reading and re-reading the selected data to unveil a list of potentially competing and occasionally contradictory concepts. Proceed to the fourth phase, deconstructing and categorising these concepts. Break down each concept and compile a table with columns featuring the concept names, descriptions, categorizations based on ontological, epistemological, or methodological roles, and references for each concept. In the fifth phase, integrate concepts by grouping together those with similarities into new conceptual entities. The sixth phase involves synthesising and resynthesising these concepts into a theoretical framework. The researcher should maintain an open, tolerant, and flexible stance throughout the iterative process of theorisation, allowing for repetitive synthesis and resynthesis until a coherent general theoretical framework emerges. In the seventh phase, validate the conceptual framework by questioning whether the proposed framework and its concepts not only make sense to the researcher but also resonate with other scholars and practitioners. Present the evolving theory at conferences or academic events to solicit feedback. Moving to the eighth phase, reevaluate the conceptual framework. A theoretical framework representing a multidisciplinary phenomenon remains dynamic and may be revised based on new insights, comments, literature, and other factors. In architectural contexts, a Conceptual Framework may extend beyond abstract theorisation, moving into the linking of ideas with site, material, and community realities. One practical way is to spatialise the framework—using diagrams, models, or annotated site plans to situate concepts in relation to built or social environments. For example, if the framework concerns “resilience,” categories can be mapped onto actual neighbourhood infrastructures or public spaces.

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Critical Thinking Mindset



WHAT?

This tool acts as a guide for individuals seeking to delve into thoughtful contemplation, encouraging the application of critical thinking questions in the exploration and discussion of novel information. Critical Thinking Mindset, as a cognitive process, involves a meticulous evaluation of various sources—ranging from data and facts to media, stories, observable phenomena, and research findings. Adept critical thinkers possess the skill to derive sensible conclusions from a pool of information, discerning between pertinent and less relevant details to effectively tackle problems or reach decisions. The cultivation of critical thinking skills proves essential for making prudent and well-informed choices, nurturing the ability to think with clarity and logic while understanding the logical interplay between ideas. The discourse surrounding critical thinking has woven its way through intellectual history, originating with ancient Greek philosophers such as Plato and Socrates and persisting as a topic of reflection and dialogue in the contemporary age. For architectural education and design practice, developing a Critical Thinking Mindset enables learners and professionals to rigorously assess design proposals, question assumptions, and make informed decisions about spatial, social, and material aspects of the built environment.

WHY?

Critical thinkers are inclined to interrogate ideas and assumptions instead of accepting them at face value. They aim to determine whether the ideas, arguments, and findings really reflect the whole perspective, and are willing to acknowledge if they fall short. Rather than relying solely on intuition or instinct, critical thinkers methodically identify, analyse, and solve problems. Essentially, Critical Thinking requires the use of their reasoning skills, emphasising an active engagement with learning as opposed to a passive reception of information. In design and architecture, this mindset is crucial not only for evaluating technical feasibility but also for questioning social, cultural, and environmental implications of a project, ensuring that solutions go beyond surface-level innovation. In summary, cultivating a Critical Thinking Mindset enables you to comprehend the connections between ideas, discern the significance and pertinence of arguments and ideas, construct and assess arguments, pinpoint inconsistencies and errors in reasoning, approach problems systematically, and reflect on the justification of your own assumptions, beliefs, and values.

WITH WHOM?

Educators and researchers guide the process, connecting learners with experts.

HOW?

To activate Critical Thinking, follow these steps: initially, select a topic for your critical thinking assessment. Second, employ a set of versatile critical thinking questions to apply to your chosen topic, posing these questions when encountering or discussing new information. Utilise pen and paper or a computer to articulate both your questions and responses. Thirdly, delve into “who” questions, identifying beneficiaries, evaluating potential harm, determining decision-makers and assessing those most directly impacted. Fourthly, consider “what” questions, analysing strengths and weaknesses, considering alternate perspectives, exploring counter-arguments and envisioning potential best or worst-case scenarios. Fifthly, address “where” questions, examining real-world applications, identifying analogous situations, pinpointing areas of greatest need and exploring global contexts where issues may arise. Sixthly, explore “when” questions, evaluating acceptable and unacceptable scenarios, considering societal benefits, anticipating potential problems and determining optimal times for action. Seventhly, probe “why” questions, scrutinising the nature of problems, exploring relevance to oneself or others, considering factors for best or worst-case scenarios and analysing the influences on individuals. Lastly, inquire about “how,” identifying similarities with other situations, assessing disruptive effects, exploring methods for discerning truth and considering ways in which it provides benefits to oneself or others. Critical Thinking encourages designers to move beyond surface-level solutions by questioning assumptions, uncovering hidden stakeholders, and weighing the broader social, cultural, and environmental implications of spatial decisions.

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Design Charrettes



WHAT?

The term “charrette,” derived from the French word for “cart,” is commonly employed to depict the concentrated effort exerted by art and architecture learners to meet project deadlines. Its use in this context is believed to have originated from the École des Beaux Arts in Paris during the 19th century. However, the nature of Design Charrettes has evolved over time. In contemporary settings, design charrettes often resemble brainstorming sessions. Modern charrettes prioritise dialogue, participation, and problem exploration, pushing the boundaries of creativity. Within socially situated architectural pedagogies, Charrettes are used as immersive, place-based learning formats that connect academic design work to real-world social contexts. In the present day, Design Charrettes may take the form of intensive brainstorming sessions. These collaborative events focus on problem-solving and creative exploration. For instance, community Design Charrettes are immersive workshops that gather individuals from diverse disciplines and backgrounds, along with community members, to collectively explore design possibilities for a specific area. This method reinforces the pedagogical value of co-design and situated learning by positioning learners as active participants in social, political, and spatial negotiations.

WHY?

The Design Charrette process aims to encapsulate the community’s vision, values, and ideas. Designers, researchers, and learners sketch these concepts onto the charrette rapidly, generating ideas about the future in sync with participants. Typically, Design Charrettes serve as an enjoyable and innovative means to involve the public, particularly in projects featuring significant landscape, streetscape, or other captivating design elements. They prove effective in fostering positive enthusiasm and energy for a project while remaining responsive to the creative input of the community. Design Charrettes function as experiential learning environments where learners engage directly with diverse publics, listening to local voices and co-producing spatial ideas. The charrette process facilitates the exploration of various options and scenarios, offering designers insights into a community’s needs and values that they might not obtain through other means.

WITH WHOM?

Educators and researchers lead the initiative, engaging learners alongside community residents, service clubs, and social collectives, with support from NGOs, government, donor organisations, and private and public institutions.

HOW?

The workshop series typically spans three to five sessions. The first step involves selecting the spatial focus of the charrette—ranging from a specific public site to a broader neighbourhood context. Identify stakeholders for cross-collaboration, including citizens, environmental NGOs, architects, planners, landscape architects, transportation engineers, public utility companies, and park maintenance authorities. Determine the charrette format, deciding on a one-day event or multiple days. Small group settings work best, so consider running parallel or consecutive sessions for larger participant lists. Prepare materials such as maps, area photographs, coloured pens, and sketching paper; physical 3D models or modular components can enhance spatial understanding and engagement. Decide on the method of capturing information, whether through photography, audio or video recordings, or live streaming. Select the time and location, possibly seeking input from key participants for suitable dates and times. Advertise the event through social media, official websites, newsletters, and direct communication with key stakeholders. Evaluate results by comparing expected versus received information and identifying any changes based on the information received.

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Design Games



WHAT?

Design Games serve as tools to stimulate dialogue between different stakeholders. They aim to foster empathy and mutual understanding between participants and designers, especially with regard to a specific user group. These games support the co-identification, definition, and collaborative resolution of design challenges alongside users and stakeholders. By condensing complex, real-world scenarios into a compressed timeframe, they enable focused analysis of the core aspects of social and spatial issues. In this educational and socially situated architectural context, Design Games function as simulations, which are particularly attractive to designers, as they allow learning about the process of change in dynamic environments, involving periodic decision making.

WHY?

Games are invaluable tools for unravelling the intricate web of environmental, social and technological forces. Moreover, they shed light on the everyday architectural contexts and social dynamics within built environments so that their nuances might go unnoticed. These games not only impart problem-solving strategies, but also convey information in a compelling way. By emphasising hands-on experiences, Design Games empower individuals to understand complex environmental dynamics, fostering changes that address human needs. They facilitate learners' exploration of how architecture shapes and is shaped by social interactions and cultural contexts. They also encourage collaborative learning by simulating real-world architectural challenges, promoting critical reflection on ethical and equitable design practices. In addition, they enhance interpersonal communication, improve group problem-solving skills, aid organisational development, broaden awareness, and encourage personal feedback and cooperative consensus.

WITH WHOM?

Educators and researchers lead the initiative, engaging learners and clients together with community residents, supported by NGOs, government, and private and public institutions.

HOW?

Different types of Design Games respond to specific objectives: Design Choice Games, Consensual Decision-making Games, Evocation Games and Evaluation Games. These games are invaluable tools in co-design processes, each with its unique approach. One such tool is the Character Game, utilised by designers to foster a deeper understanding of users and discover new avenues for collaboration among participating groups. The Character Game comprises three key stages. Firstly, in the user study phase, designers conduct interviews and observations at user locations to gain valuable insights. In architecture, this phase encourages learners to engage directly with communities and the built environment to understand the social contexts influencing design. Secondly, in the preparation phase, a character is meticulously designed with the input of groups representatives, utilising resources like templates, photos, and quotations. This collaborative creation supports learners in appreciating diverse perspectives and challenges embedded in architectural spaces. Lastly, in the co-design session stage, users actively engage with the game materials. Here, participants share personal experiences related to users, co-create an ideal user space, explore various scenarios within this envisioned space, and engage in reflective discussions about the gaming experience. Through these stages, the Character Game becomes a powerful tool, enhancing empathy, fostering collaboration, and enriching the design process.

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Dilemma-driven Design



WHAT?

Dilemma-driven Design (DDD) is an innovative design approach inspired by conflicts, using individuals' internal struggles and personal dilemmas as a creative foundation to develop products and services that resonate emotionally. By delving into the conflicting aspects of users' goals and values, this method provides a deep understanding of design situations, appreciating the intricate complexity of human experiences and contexts without oversimplification. It draws attention to the emotional and ethical dimensions of design, encouraging learners and practitioners to engage empathetically with tension, ambiguity, and contradiction in real-world contexts. In the realm of human-centred design, dilemmas are viewed as the experience of being faced with two mutually exclusive choices related to personal concerns, making their simultaneous realisation highly challenging, if not impossible.

WHY?

By placing users' dilemmas at the core of your design strategy, you gain valuable insights into their behaviour and can respond more effectively. When applied within community-engaged or context-sensitive learning environments, this approach helps surface the deeper social and cultural tensions embedded in everyday experience. Dilemma-driven Design encourages a careful consideration of the conflicts within the user's experience, providing a solid foundation to enrich your design concepts. Interestingly, conflicts between elements become a catalyst for creativity, inspiring inventive solutions to reconcile conflicting requirements and restore harmony in the design process. It invites participants to stay with the tension, allowing discomfort and uncertainty to guide more thoughtful, inclusive, and socially responsive design outcomes.

WITH WHOM?

The activity is led by educators and researchers, involving learners in collaboration with community residents, social collectives, and service clubs, and supported by donor organisations and private and public institutions.

HOW?

Identifying users' dilemmas and generating ideas to meet their intentions involves a three-step process. The initial step is discovery, where engagement with users helps to identify the challenges they face when using your products or spaces. Qualitative studies such as interviews, diary studies or usability tests can effectively capture these dilemmas. In learning settings that prioritise situated knowledge and lived experience, this stage also serves as an opportunity for learners to build trust, listen deeply, and recognise the socio-cultural forces shaping user behaviour. The second stage, definition, requires choosing a specific dilemma to focus on. This selection process involves assessing the relevance of the Dilemma to the space studied, its potential to inspire innovative design ideas, and how meaningful its formulation can be. To guide this process, consider three questions: Is this dilemma pertinent to the majority of citizens and their well-being? Can this dilemma spark creative design concepts? Can I rephrase this dilemma to explore alternative solutions? Finally, in the application stage, you develop ideas that address the chosen dilemma. These ideas can be categorised as resolving, moderating, or triggering dilemmas.

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Draw (how to make) Toast



WHAT?

The Draw Toast exercise serves as a tool for familiarising individuals with the principles of visual thinking, working memory, mental models, and systems thinking. This exercise facilitates meaningful engagement among people and encourages visual thinking. Particularly, it proves to be an excellent mapping exercise, emphasising the creation of a systems model for addressing significant challenges, such as articulating our vision or tackling the next ambitious endeavour. Applied to architectural education and design, the Draw Toast exercise helps learners visualise design processes, map user experiences, and represent complex spatial or programmatic systems, fostering clarity and shared understanding in collaborative projects.

WHY?

This exercise can be employed to enhance group model building skills within a team or adapted to address real-life challenges, unlocking our capacity to tackle intricate problems through visual thinking. Collaborating on problem-solving with cross-functional teams, whether in operational or strategic contexts, adds adaptability to the work and introduces innovative thinking into the operational sphere. In architectural and urban design education, the method becomes a powerful way to externalise mental models: by drawing processes rather than merely describing them, learners make visible the assumptions and hidden connections that shape their understanding of space, use, and construction. Naturally, these sessions require a solid structure; otherwise, valuable time may be spent in discussion. Recognising the dynamic nature of the world, as opposed to its static nature, is crucial. Ultimately, this approach provides a refreshing means to involve diverse practitioners from various fields, allowing them to gain new perspectives on how their work is interconnected and influential.

WITH WHOM?

Educators and researchers guide the process, connecting learners with experts.

HOW?

To conduct a Draw a Toast session, begin by preparing materials such as markers, thick paper stock, sticky notes or index cards, and masking tape. Ensure there's enough space for all participants to view each other's creations. Set expectations for the meeting, focusing on a particular topic. Keep the session informal, distributing markers and paper for participants to individually draw a picture of how to make toast within a limited time frame. Reflect on the drawings by having each participant showcase their creation and placing them on a large wall space. Discuss the drawings, noting their complexity, presence of people, and other aspects. Introduce the concept of systems thinking by playing the TED video by Wujec (2013) titled "Got a wicked problem? First, tell me how you make toast." Discuss the number and types of nodes depicted in participants' drawings. Instruct participants to silently draw a picture illustrating how to improve the group's current focus, whether strategic or tactical. This could involve defining values, tracking success, or enhancing team collaboration. Have participants present and explain their individual diagrams, facilitating a comparison of drawings to identify common links and nodes. Collaboratively create a systems diagram of the challenges using sticky notes and drawn links. Discuss and refine the diagram as a group. Reflect on the insights that emerged during the session. Consider how the exercise has enhanced understanding and provided new perspectives on the challenges at hand. Draw a Toast can be used to visualise complex systems—such as mobility flows, spatial hierarchies, or stakeholder interactions—helping teams to see hidden connections and co-create shared mental models for tackling design challenges.

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Empathy Mapping



WHAT?

The Empathy Map is a valuable collaborative tool that helps capture essential insights into specific user groups. By diving into users' thoughts, actions, emotions, and expressions as they interact with a service, product, or space, this tool fosters a shared understanding of user needs and greatly informs decision-making processes. Empathy Maps allow teams to gather and consolidate their collective knowledge about citizens, leading to a cohesive understanding of their unique characteristics. Whether used to enhance team comprehension before a crucial decision or swiftly integrate data after an observation session, empathy mapping proves instrumental in refining user-centred approaches. It also strengthens learners' capacity to listen, interpret, and translate human experiences into inclusive and context-aware design responses.

WHY?

Empathy Mapping enables us to empathise with others by understanding their thoughts and emotions. Research notes are typically organised based on what interviewees are thinking, feeling, doing, seeing, and hearing while interacting with a space, building, or environment. This approach allows teams to discern users' moods and experiences without solely focusing on their behaviour. The tool is easily adaptable, making it convenient to update after each research round. It can capture the experiences of a single user or represent a collective perspective from multiple users. It supports learners in analysing how lived experiences intersect with physical and social space, enriching their understanding of spatial justice and user diversity. Moreover, Empathy Mapping encourages the team to perceive users as real individuals, shedding light on how to prioritise their needs effectively.

WITH WHOM?

Educators and researchers lead the initiative, engaging learners alongside social collectives and service clubs, with support from government, NGOs, donor organisations, and private and public institutions.

HOW?

To create a valuable Empathy Map, start by defining your objectives and gathering necessary materials, such as a whiteboard and sticky notes. Ensure the data collected is based on real observations, providing a reliable foundation for your insights. Set up the activity by creating a grid and labelling the essential quadrants: “says,” “does,” “thinks,” and “feels.” Place the user or stakeholder at the centre. Optionally, include “gain” and “pain” quadrants. Says captures verbalised statements from interviews, Thinks delves into the user’s thoughts and concerns, Does outlines their actions, and Feels explores their emotional state. Then, record observations on sticky notes for each quadrant separately. This process can be applied to analyse how different individuals engage with and perceive social, cultural, and spatial conditions in their environments. Finally, look for patterns and connections within the observations, considering their impact on the user’s emotions. Synthesise the user’s needs and insights. Discuss these findings as a team, addressing any assumptions and questions. It’s essential to validate your observations by consulting with actual users to ensure accuracy.

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Fishbone Diagram or Ishikawa Diagram



WHAT?

This tool, commonly known as an Ishikawa Diagram, functions as a cause-and-effect illustration that outlines the potential factors contributing to a specific problem or outcome. In architectural practice and pedagogy, it can be used to systematically analyse challenges in design or construction projects, helping learners and designers identify underlying causes of spatial, social, or technical issues. Similar to a real fishbone, it presents a central line extending to the main outcome (head), symbolising the problem statement. It therefore presupposes that the main question to be investigated has been previously identified using alternative tools. Additional spines radiate from the central one, symbolising different categories of causal factors.

WHY?

Examining and prioritising local perspectives on your primary topic is beneficial as it provides both the facilitator and the group with valuable insights into their shared understanding of the issue. Additionally, it encourages the creation of symbols that resonate with local people, which can be integrated into subsequent educational initiatives. The Fishbone Diagram serves as a valuable framework for organising brainstorming sessions and efficiently categorising ideas. This tool is versatile and allows facilitated discussions in architectural pedagogy and practice, on the causes and effects of spatial or social problems, fostering a socially situated approach to design by integrating community perspectives into project analysis and decision-making.

WITH WHOM?

Educators and researchers lead the initiative, engaging learners alongside community residents, service clubs, and social collectives, with support from NGOs, government, donor organisations, and private and public institutions.

HOW?

Create a Fishbone Diagram by following these steps: Initially, reach a consensus on a problem statement to analyse complex social and spatial challenges, and position it at the centre-right of the whiteboard. Enclose it in a box (the head) and draw a horizontal arrow extending to it (the backbone). Next, engage in a brainstorming session to identify major categories of causes by asking “why” questions. Participants provide suggestions, and these are added to the lateral bones of the fish, with the categories of causes written as branches stemming from the main arrow. Subsequently, explore all potential causes of the problem by asking, “why does this happen?” and record the ideas as branches linked to the relevant category. Continue probing by asking “why does this happen?” for each identified cause, repeating the process iteratively to unveil root causes and overarching themes, encouraging solutions grounded in contextually aware, participatory strategies. Improve the creativity and clarity of the exercise by incorporating images or symbols. As the group exhausts ideas, redirect focus to areas on the chart where contributions are scarce.

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Five Whys



WHAT?

The Five Whys represent a sequence of inquiries designed to delve beyond the surface issues of a user experience, aiming to reveal the underlying motivations that drive it. Initial responses typically address the most apparent aspects of a problem or situation. With each successive “why,” we delve further into the issue, ultimately reaching its core cause. The Five Whys help uncover deeper social, cultural, and systemic factors that influence spatial problems. This method aids in moving beyond the symptoms and uncovering the fundamental reasons behind a problem. By systematically questioning spatial challenges, learners can reveal root causes embedded in power relations, historical contexts, and institutional practices.

WHY?

The Five Whys tool offers a straightforward and effortless way to connect the dots between underlying causes and surface problems, with little need for extensive preparation. It's a handy tool for swiftly tackling complex issues, encouraging participants to dig deeper when discussing common problems. The method helps learners trace spatial challenges—such as displacement, inaccessibility, or environmental degradation—back to systemic or historical causes like policy decisions, economic inequality, or social exclusion. This approach fosters a shared understanding among team members, helping them grasp the root causes and equipping them with problem-solving skills for the future. By breaking down causality into stages, even hidden aspects of processes become visible, allowing for a comprehensive exploration. It also stimulates critical reflection on how architecture participates in reproducing or resisting those underlying systems. This method enables a deep dive into problems, unravelling their intricacies to find logical solutions. Sharing this information widely provides insight not only into the team's challenges but also into the strategies employed to address these issues.

WITH WHOM?

Researchers and educators initiate the activity with learners and community residents, in collaboration with social collectives and service clubs, and with the institutional support of NGOs, donor organisations, government, and private and public institutions.

HOW?

In problem-solving activities, repeatedly asking “why” up to five times helps arrive at a solution. The individuals or teams answering these questions need to provide a convincing explanation for each step in the causal pathway leading back from the initial problem. Limiting this pathway to five stages ensures the process stays relevant to the original question, yet it still uncovers insights into the underlying processes that might be influencing the situation. This method can be used to unpack how spatial injustices—such as displacement, exclusion, or lack of access—are the result of deeper systemic conditions rather than isolated design flaws. However, this process is not as straightforward as it appears. Users might not be entirely truthful in their responses, and using this technique in group settings can sometimes be counterproductive. Social pressures, institutional bias, or positionality within a group can influence how problems are framed or how causes are identified. Navigating through this process and extracting meaningful answers requires significant experience, and the outcome is not always predictable. Facilitators must be attentive to power dynamics in the conversation and encourage critical questioning that challenges surface-level assumptions about spatial or social problems.

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Flow Exercise



WHAT?

The Flow Exercise, regarded as a threshold concept, acts as a conceptual gateway or portal, guiding individuals towards a previously unreachable and potentially challenging perspective on a particular subject. It has the potential to bring about a fresh understanding, interpretation, or outlook, resulting in a transformed internal view of the subject matter, the subject landscape, or even one's worldview. Within design education and architectural practice, the Flow Exercise enables learners and practitioners to explore complex spatial concepts and design processes, fostering deep insights into how people experience and interact with built environments. This exercise possesses transformative qualities, leading to a substantial shift in how a subject is perceived. It is often irreversible, meaning the acquired insights are unlikely to be forgotten and can only be unlearned through considerable effort. Additionally, this exercise is integrative, revealing previously concealed interconnections and relationships within the subject matter.

WHY?

It emerged from the concept of utilising seemingly unrelated elements to spark a fresh and imaginative perspective on a concept. This approach has swiftly become appealing for its educational richness and dynamic nature. It not only fosters the emergence of new connections, thoughts, and perceptions but also offer a moment to deliberately slow down, encouraging thoughtful contemplation and playful expression through thinking and drawing. This exercise provides a mental rest, opening the door to new ideas. In architecture and urban design education, the Flow Exercise can help learners explore alternative narratives of space and form, using intuitive associations to rethink spatial relationships and uncover socially situated design possibilities.

WITH WHOM?

Educators and researchers guide the process, connecting learners with experts.

HOW?

To conduct Elmarie Costandius's Flow Exercise, shift away from digital interfaces and focus on the tactile connection between your mind, hands, and arm muscles for writing. Sit comfortably with paper and pen, directing your concentration from your mind to your hand. Draw spontaneously, alternating focus between the sensations of the paper, pen, and hand muscles. Avoid analysing the drawings. Later, shift focus to your head, contemplating your concept while still drawing. Observe how the concept influences your drawing compared to when focused on hand movements. Let the hand guide thought, fostering a dynamic connection between the concept and spontaneous drawing. By prioritising embodied gestures and intuitive mark-making, learners are encouraged to reconnect with the physicality of drawing as a tool for exploration. This shift cultivates an openness to unexpected forms and ideas, highlighting the generative role of the body in creative thinking.

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How Might We



WHAT?

It serves as a method to transform your insights into design opportunities by rephrasing them as How Might We questions. The How Might We format is chosen because it implies the feasibility of a solution and provides the flexibility to address them in various ways. A well-crafted How Might We question doesn't propose a specific solution but provides an ideal framework for fostering innovative thinking. In architectural pedagogy and design practice, this method helps learners and designers convert observations, user needs, or spatial challenges into actionable design opportunities, guiding creative exploration without constraining possible solutions.

WHY?

This tool proves particularly beneficial when a team, learners, or designers encounter a design standstill and require a new perspective on problem-solving. It discourages individuals from proposing solutions that may not align well with the identified problems. Formulating "How-might-we" questions fosters creativity and ensures that teams remain directed towards addressing the correct problems. Ultimately, it can be applied at any stage of a project when there is a scarcity of fresh ideas. In architectural pedagogy and practice, "How might we" questions help learners and design teams frame socially situated design challenges, encouraging solutions that consider community needs, social impact, and inclusivity.

WITH WHOM?

Educators and researchers guide the process, connecting learners with experts.

HOW?

Implementation requires patience and a collaborative environment, much like any other process. Initially, apply it to simple or seemingly trivial issues to understand how it works. Then, review your created insight statements and transform them into questions by incorporating “How might we” at the beginning. The objective is to identify design opportunities; thus, if your insights lead to multiple How Might We questions, that’s advantageous. Evaluate your How Might We questions to ensure they permit diverse solutions; if not, broaden them. A well-crafted How Might We question should inspire numerous potential answers and serve as a starting point for brainstorming. However, be cautious not to make How Might We questions overly broad. This process is challenging, but an effective How Might We question should provide a specific enough framework to guide your brainstorming while also allowing room for exploring unconventional ideas. To formulate effective questions, consider several tips. Firstly, begin with the problems you’ve identified. Secondly, refrain from proposing a solution in your question. Thirdly, maintain a broad scope in your “How might we” questions. Fourthly, align your questions with the desired outcome. Fifthly, express your questions positively. Lastly, dedicate time with your team to craft and choose your “How might we” questions before embarking on the ideation process. Encourage everyone’s input and use a checklist to refine the questions: Does it stem from an existing problem or insight? Does it target a desired outcome? Is it written in a positive manner? Is it broad enough to encourage creative ideas? Does it avoid suggesting a specific solution? By learning to formulate well-structured questions, learners are encouraged to move beyond problem identification toward generative thinking, exploring alternative design strategies that balance creativity with feasibility. This method not only strengthens ideation skills but also trains future architects to approach challenges as open-ended and participatory processes.

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Life Road Maps



WHAT?

A Life Road Map serves as a strategic tool representing a journey, encompassing movement and a final destination. In this activity, learners create a visual representation of a person's life, either someone else's or their own, emphasising significant events and decisions that moulded the individual's identity. It helps learners understand how personal narratives intersect with spatial, cultural, and socio-political contexts—revealing how place, displacement, migration, and access to resources shape life trajectories. This exercise fosters a deeper comprehension of historical figures and encourages self-reflection, prompting learners to consider the multitude of factors influencing decision-making. It invites critical engagement with how systemic inequalities affect people's paths, offering insights into the lived dimensions of architectural impact.

WHY?

Crafting personal Life Road Maps proves invaluable in prompting learners to contemplate pivotal choices that have defined their own identities. This holistic approach deepens apprentices' understanding, encouraging a more reflective perspective in their personal lives and design activities. This practice helps learners explore how their own experiences are shaped by spatial, cultural, and systemic conditions, fostering awareness of how identity and environment are interlinked. By using this tool, learners not only value their own growth but also learn to question their assumptions about social and cultural contexts relevant to their projects. Additionally, it improves the intimidating experience of starting with a blank page, making the creative process more approachable and engaging. The activity supports a design mindset grounded in self-awareness, critical reflection, and social responsibility.

WITH WHOM?

The tool is developed by educators and researchers, involving learners and supported by private and public institutions.

HOW?

To prepare learners for constructing a Life Road Map, encourage them to reflect on pivotal moments and significant decisions through journal entries, both in the lives of historical figures and in their own lives. These reflections should consider diverse influences, including historical events, relationships, personal goals, beliefs, and human behaviours like fear and prejudice. In the design studio, learners can create a project road map as a reflective exercise parallel to their design work. Using a guided template, they go through phases: “unlearn,” “learn,” “relearn,” “reflect,” and “evaluate.” In these stages, apprentices critically analyse their methods, challenge assumptions, and adapt their approaches. They focus on unlearning past design behaviours, learn from new experiences, and relearn by adapting methods. Reflection allows them to understand their experiences, and evaluation prompts a comprehensive self-assessment. The process encourages learners to consider various themes like personal experiences, social justice, non-hierarchical collaboration, and engagement.

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Livingston Design Method



WHAT?

Formulated by the architect Rodolfo Livingston in Cuba, this participatory design approach supports the creation of self-housing. In essence, the method involves the systematic use of participatory techniques, including role-playing and the utilisation of blueprints. These techniques aid residents in visualising various design options under consideration. Essentially, this design method facilitates a collaborative process for residents involved in constructing, renovating, or expanding their homes. It has been developed through meticulous analysis, addressing the dynamics of interaction between architects and clients. By embedding educational value within the design process itself, this approach enables architecture learners and practitioners to critically engage with real-world social contexts.

WHY?

Livingston's approach demonstrates a keen understanding of how the design process must be structured to genuinely achieve affordability. It challenges the traditional top-down policy model and acknowledges the importance of supporting citizens in constructing their own homes. Its primary goal is to foster residents' active involvement in shaping the design of their houses and facilitate interactions between architects and residents. This assistance helps residents articulate their spatial requirements and make well-informed decisions about the upcoming building processes. It includes explicit guidance on conducting thorough family interviews and understanding their needs through role play. This strategy understands that people tend to communicate more freely with architects when they are not bogged down by hierarchical barriers. By centring both family and place, the approach reflects pedagogical values that prioritise local knowledge and situational awareness within design education. The family serves as the initial focal point, but the significance of the location is also emphasised.

WITH WHOM?

Educators and researchers guide the process, connecting learners with key stakeholders for collaborative activities.

HOW?

The process involves four distinct phases: In Phase 1, the architect spends approximately 2 hours on a site visit to the family home, focusing on three key areas of data collection. First, information is collected about the site itself. Secondly, data related to the family is collected through interviews with all family members and participation in four role-playing games. These games include “plus and minus,” in which family members express their preferences about certain aspects of the house, “prosecutor,” in which the family acts as a prosecutor questioning the attributes of the house, “client’s project,” in which the family proposes a design for the house, and “dream house,” in which the family imagines their ideal home without limitations. This phase becomes a powerful teaching framework in socially situated architectural education, as it enables learners to develop empathy and practice deep listening through creative engagement. Moving on to Phase 2, feasibility studies involve the creation of design solutions. The architect refines the client’s project and develops two additional design variants that take all elements into account. This step also functions as a pedagogical exercise in co-design, guiding learners to balance imagination with contextual constraints. Phase 3 revolves around the presentation of these alternative design solutions to the residents. The architect elucidates the drawings, ensuring that all family members understand the options. The family then has seven to ten days to choose the final design. In phase 4, the chosen design variant is consolidated. The community architect then draws up a final plan and an instruction manual, providing comprehensive details about the construction process and necessary materials.

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Mind Maps



WHAT?

A Mind Map offers a simple method for spontaneously generating ideas, without being constrained by a specific order or structure. This tool facilitates the capture and organisation of thoughts and knowledge, allowing for the establishment of connections between ideas, opportunities, and potential obstacles within a given study context. It serves as a visual representation that encompasses all the information relevant to a problem or solution, incorporating various themes and sub-themes associated with the issue. In team-oriented mind mapping, participants are encouraged to use concise keywords that encapsulate a concept, along with the incorporation of drawings, symbols, icons, pictograms and other visual elements to enhance the illustration of their ideas. Applied to architectural education and design, Mind Mapping supports learners in visually organising design ideas, exploring spatial relationships, and linking user needs, programmatic requirements, and design strategies, fostering clarity and creativity in both individual and collaborative projects.

WHY?

This approach transforms a lengthy, dull list of information into a vibrant, memorable, and well-organised diagram that aligns with the natural processes of the brain. It enables the creation of numerous associations, allowing you to cherry-pick the most pertinent ones to serve as foundational elements for your solution. Alternatively, it can visually highlight topics and themes requiring further exploration. Additionally, participants are prompted to unpack their ideas, and they can observe and document the outcomes of the discussion. Mind Mapping proves to be an excellent method for collaborative thinking, facilitating the collective “connecting of the dots.” In architectural education, Mind Maps can be employed to integrate diverse observations, research insights, and community inputs, fostering socially situated design thinking and enabling learners to visualise complex relationships within a project’s social and spatial contexts.

WITH WHOM?

Educators and researchers guide the process, connecting learners with community residents, social collectives, and experts.

HOW?

Before embarking on the creation of your Mind Map, the first step is to choose a suitable mind mapping tool. If you are collaborating with a team, opt for a digital whiteboard or mind mapping software to facilitate collective contributions and access to the mind map post-session. Do not be intimidated by the initial blank space; your Mind Map will naturally evolve as you begin the process. Follow these subsequent steps: first, begin by establishing the central topic, whether it is a problem, design challenge, or central idea. Second, branch out into subtopics by listing primary topics derived from your research, initially focusing on three to five. Expand further by adding related topics or associations; at this stage, ideas need not be fully developed. In a group setting, encourage collaborative building by rotating around the sheet and contributing to each other's ideas. Third, connect related topics visually, using lines or colours. This step exposes patterns and connections that may be less apparent in a linear list. Identify emerging categories or themes, augmenting them with sticky notes, images, or text, and use distinct colours to emphasise commonalities. Fourth, evaluate the relevance of themes to your main objective. Engage in discussions with your team to discern the most compelling outcomes. Adjust the Mind Map to reflect these categorical choices, orienting your ideas towards a specific direction. Fifth, delve deeper into each idea by expanding and refining with additional research and detail. Include important contextual information and resources to enhance the informativeness of the Mind Map for both your team and external stakeholders. In architectural practice and pedagogy, Mind Maps can be treated not only as a tool for organising information but as a medium for spatial and social thinking. For example, a central theme like "public square" can branch into sensory experiences, temporal rhythms of use, and stakeholder perspectives, with each node linked to sketches, photos, or quotes from local users. In studio work, rotating contributions allows peers to literally build upon each other's ideas, producing a collective visualisation of possible design trajectories. In participatory processes, inviting residents to co-create or annotate the map transforms it into a shared space of negotiation, where architectural decisions emerge from a tapestry of situated experiences rather than from a single authorial vision.

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Phillips 66



WHAT?

Phillips 66, a brainstorming tool devised by Donald Phillips, an educator at Michigan State College (USA), fosters inclusive discussions within larger groups. It encourages every participant to voice their thoughts comfortably. This method serves as a valuable tool for capturing diverse perspectives on specific issues from a substantial number of individuals. To facilitate this, the large audience is divided into smaller, more manageable groups of six members each. After engaging in discussions, these groups then share their findings with the conference panel or leader. This approach promotes collaborative problem-solving and ensures that every voice is heard and considered. By creating spaces for mutual recognition and contextual understanding, it supports equitable dialogue and fosters collective meaning-making among learners and community participants alike.

WHY?

This approach is ideal for engaging larger groups in more effective brainstorming. It provides an equal opportunity for all participants to express themselves freely, allowing a wide range of creative voices to contribute to problem solving. It is especially useful when participants are reluctant to speak in front of a large audience. By organising participants into smaller discussion groups, even shy participants are more likely to share their opinions without fear of addressing a crowd. This method fosters safe, relational spaces that honour diverse forms of expression and participation. In addition, this method is valuable for quickly gathering information on interests, issues, suggestions, and inquiries.

WITH WHOM?

Educators and researchers lead the initiative, engaging learners alongside community residents, service clubs, and social collectives, with support from NGOs, government, donor organisations, and private and public institutions.

HOW?

The brainstorming process can be divided into five steps. Firstly, participants from a large discussion group are divided into smaller subgroups, ideally separated from each other to prevent the exchange of ideas. Secondly, spokespersons are chosen within these subgroups to articulate their group's ideas, ensuring everyone's input is heard. This role reinforces collective responsibility and peer-led communication, aligning with pedagogical values of co-learning and mutual respect, which are particularly important in the design studio. Thirdly, the problem to be analysed is presented to each subgroup, and a 6-minute discussion takes place to brainstorm solutions. In the fourth step, designated spokespeople from each group present their ideas, which are recorded visibly for all participants. Finally, all written ideas are collectively discussed and evaluated. In an online variation, a facilitator selects a discussion topic and allows six participants to express their thoughts using a limited number of characters or words within a specified time frame. Participants must wait until all six initial responses have been posted before engaging in the subsequent general discussion in the online forum.

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Photo Walk



WHAT?

In a Photo Walk, you explore a designated area, capturing images of anything that catches your attention. Analysing these photos with your team can unveil novel themes or patterns, fostering the generation of innovative ideas. The Photo Walk serves as an exercise in keen observation, encouraging you to see beyond the obvious and explore creative solutions. It provides a platform for discovering fresh insights, proving beneficial even for those deeply entrenched in a particular topic. Within architectural pedagogy, photo walks allow learners to observe how communities interact with space, uncovering social practices, accessibility challenges, and everyday uses of the built environment, which can then inform more inclusive and contextually responsive design proposals.

WHY?

Its primary objective is to contemplate everyday practices, enhancing comprehension of the surrounding world and fostering a relational understanding of both human and non-human entities within a given space. Photo walks constitute imaginative encounters with commonplace settings, drawing inspiration from urban flaneurs and the Situationists. By capturing an area through images, it becomes a source of new perspectives for addressing social issues. The outcomes of a Photo Walk can serve as a foundational element for presenting insights; categories can be created to generate ideas for solutions. In architectural pedagogy and practice, photo walks enable learners to observe and document spatial and social interactions within real environments, supporting socially situated design research and enriching understanding of how communities inhabit and transform space. Additionally, photography serves as a creative tool to render theoretical concepts visible in urban landscapes, capturing the experiences and atmospheres of specific urban places, thereby fostering a multifaceted understanding of the urban environment.

WITH WHOM?

The activity is initiated by educators and researchers, involving learners alongside community residents, with the support of experts.

HOW?

To conduct a successful Photo Walk, begin by planning the route and setting ground rules. Communicate that each participant should capture their own images, focusing on the area's details. The objective is to document the surroundings rather than addressing a social issue. In architectural education, Photo Walks can be used to explore the social and spatial dimensions of urban environments. Learners can focus on how communities interact with public spaces, revealing patterns of use, social behaviours, and spatial constraints. Ensure everyone has a camera and wears comfortable shoes. Start with a group test at the starting location, where participants stand still and photograph the first thing that catches their eye. Following this, create smaller groups and assign a leader to ensure adherence to the rules. Participants in each group should photograph anything that sparks their interest. After the walk, regroup and collectively choose and name the pictures. Each participant should select 3 to 5 photos, providing titles and captions. Upload the photos to a computer for organisation or printing, and review them by zooming in and out. Thoroughly go through the photos individually and collectively. Note down any thoughts that arise. Compile a list of everything noticed during the photo walk. Craft short stories for the most intriguing insights, assigning titles and writing brief descriptions. Connect the photos to the stories and arrange details of insights and photos on a page or wall.

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Planning Cell



WHAT?

Planning Cells operate as a thoughtful strategy where a diverse group of randomly-selected participants collaborates to devise solutions for a specific issue. The resulting recommendations are then presented to relevant decision-makers. This method acts as a kind of “micro” parliament, aiming to enhance citizen representation, especially concerning government representatives. About twenty-five randomly chosen individuals serve as public consultants for a limited time, addressing planning or policy problems and proposing solutions. The number of Planning Cells involved in a project can vary. Within each cell, participants gather and exchange information, explore potential solutions, and assess them based on their positive and negative consequences. Additionally, experts, stakeholders, and interest groups have the opportunity to express their perspectives to cell members. Applied to architectural and urban design, Planning Cells allow learners, designers, or community members to collaboratively explore spatial proposals, evaluate planning strategies, and contribute informed recommendations for public spaces or built environments. The results of the cells’ efforts are consolidated in a citizens’ report, which is presented to both the authorities and the participants.

WHY?

Planning Cells serve as a deliberative approach aimed at enhancing the effectiveness of decision-making in the planning process and providing fresh avenues for citizen political participation. Typically employed to chart a course of action for pressing issues with multiple available options, these cells are especially suitable for situations where there is not a significant existing polarisation. The main goal is to enhance the effectiveness of decision-making in the planning process and simultaneously generate fresh opportunities for citizen engagement in the political arena. In architectural pedagogy and practice, Planning Cells can be applied to involve learners, community members, and stakeholders in collaboratively exploring design alternatives, ensuring that diverse social perspectives inform spatial and urban interventions.

WITH WHOM?

The activity is initiated by educators and researchers, involving learners alongside community residents, with the support of experts.

HOW?

To effectively implement a Planning Cell, several sequential steps must be taken. Once organisers have chosen 25 participants, they form a planning cell, to which a commissioning body assigns a specific problem. The process unfolds through three distinct phases. In Phase I, participants are familiarised with the topic through lectures, videos, etc., and experts or interest group representatives address the cell to provide insights. Following this information gathering, cell members seek clarification. Phase II involves participants processing the information through group discussions. The cell is subdivided into five smaller groups, each tasked with prioritising values and establishing criteria to analyse the problem. Recommendations are developed, voted on, and the top choice is presented to the larger group. In Phase III, these recommendations are presented to the entire assembly, and after all participating citizens are informed about various solutions, the group evaluates the options. Moderators record these evaluations to compile a final report, summarising the cell's results, detailing the procedures, and specifying the addressed problem. Initially, this report draft is given to all planning cell members for review and edits. After participants make changes, the final report is published and presented to the commissioning body. By integrating citizen voices with expert input, learners experience firsthand how diverse knowledge systems shape decision-making. This participatory structure trains them to balance technical reasoning with social responsibility, cultivating the skills needed to develop architectural proposals that respond to plural values and long-term community needs.

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Problem Tree Analysis



WHAT?

A Problem Tree serves as a valuable tool in project planning, especially for community engagement or behaviour change initiatives. It offers a structured way to dissect complex issues by identifying the causes (roots) and effects (branches) of a central problem (trunk). By framing causes negatively, it helps in distinguishing underlying reasons from surface symptoms, providing a deep understanding of the situation. Problem Trees can help visualise spatial or social challenges in the built environment, laying the groundwork for participatory and context-sensitive solutions. The transformation of a Problem Tree into a solution tree is a crucial step. This process involves converting negative statements into positive ones, creating a roadmap of interventions required to address the core problem effectively.

WHY?

Gaining a deeper understanding of the issues a project aims to address is valuable. It facilitates informed decisions regarding the specific problem areas the project can focus on. This clarity is vital for effective communication with stakeholders, enabling them to comprehend the problem and its causes/effects. In architecture and urban planning, using visual tools like the Problem Tree helps clarify spatial or social challenges, making it easier to present design arguments or negotiate project priorities with clients, users, or authorities. Employing visual aids like the Problem Tree assists in crafting persuasive arguments for presentations or negotiations, enhancing the project's ability to effectively convince stakeholders.

WITH WHOM?

Residents and learners participate directly, guided by educators, with support from parents and collaboration with service clubs and social collectives, and backed by NGOs, educational institutions, researchers, donor organisations, and government.

HOW?

Start assessing all prevalent issues and pinpoint the central problem the assignment aims to tackle. Once a comprehensive understanding of the landscape is established, proceed by probing, “Why has this problem occurred?” and pinpoint 4 or 5 primary causes, often referred to as first-level causes or thickest roots. For each first-level cause, delve deeper with the question, “Why has this occurred?” This analysis reveals second-level causes that are specific to each of the first-level causes identified earlier. These second-level causes further illuminate the underlying factors contributing to the central problem, providing deeper insights into the complexities of the situation. Extend this process if needed to uncover third-level causes. Once this phase is completed, organise these causes into rows under their respective levels. This structured arrangement helps to visually represent the hierarchical relationship between the central problem, its first-level causes, and the corresponding second-level causes, facilitating clarity and understanding during the planning process. Above the core problem, outline the primary effects and repercussions resulting from the issue. Use a similar method to identify first-level, second-level, and third-level effects or implications of the core problem. You can then evaluate the identified causes and effects, prioritising the most significant, urgent, or manageable ones. These become focal points for action. Finally, examine the Problem Tree’s analysis to inform decisions about the assignment and its activities. Utilise insights to guide strategic choices. The last step requires to convert the Problem Tree into a solution tree, crafting positive statements for each cause and effect. This transformation provides a solution-oriented framework, emphasising means-end relationships for effective implementation.

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Quick Voting Tools: Dot Voting and Barometers



WHAT?

These methods offer a convenient way to tap into the prevailing feelings of a group. The spectrum of approaches varies, from giving individuals a single vote to allowing multiple votes or providing a platform for expressing reactions to all proposed ideas. These participatory tools help learners critically engage with collective preferences and challenge dominant design assumptions through democratic processes. These tools can be used effectively to quickly gauge which ideas, views or data capture the interest of the majority, eliminating the need for lengthy debates. Dot Voting is a group voting technique designed to reveal a team's preferences from a list of options. In essence, it streamlines decision-making by quickly narrowing down options, prioritising ideas and highlighting the most popular selections. Moreover, integrating such tools in studio critiques or community workshops fosters inclusive dialogue and encourages diverse voices in shaping design directions. In addition, there are other tools, such as Barometers, that offer a quick way to capture everyone's perspective on each issue. This not only streamlines the decision-making process, but adds to the efficiency of the overall group collaboration dynamic.

WHY?

These approaches are less mentally taxing than the exhaustive task of ranking all available options. Participants do not have to make a comparative judgement for each option and can express their preferences for several options at once. This not only reduces cognitive load, but also enhances collaborative learning within architectural education, encouraging learners to engage actively with diverse perspectives. Additionally, it fosters engagement, allowing participants to witness the decision-making process unfold and understand the factors that influence the final choice. In addition, these methods act as a safeguard against one individual's opinion disproportionately influencing the team's decision. Instead, they rationalise the available alternatives, focusing attention on a handful of priority options, which streamlines the decision-making process and models equitable participation crucial in socially situated architectural pedagogies.

WITH WHOM?

Educators and researchers lead the initiative, engaging learners alongside community residents, service clubs, and social collectives, with support from NGOs, government, donor organisations, and private and public institutions.

HOW?

Dot Voting is a familiar technique where participants utilise sticky dots or markers to indicate their preferences. Materials are distributed around the room, either pinned to walls or displayed on tables, and participants navigate the space, marking items deserving of more attention. To implement Dot Voting, follow these steps: First, organise options into groups to visualise intersecting themes, especially when dealing with similar options. During the voting phase, quickly identify the themes the team is leaning towards. Second, distribute dot stickers to each participant, with the facilitator determining the number of votes (dots) per person (a common rule is 25% of the total options). Third, clarify voting constraints by explaining the purpose of the vote, how the outcome will be used, and the criteria for voting (e.g., limiting votes to options with ownership or expertise). Fourth, conduct the vote silently as participants place their dots on one or more options. Fifth, evaluate the outcome by reviewing the board or table, encouraging discussion, and allowing participants to share their voting rationale and discuss next steps. Sixth, conduct additional votes as necessary based on the vote's goal. Another voting tool involves using "barometers," adapted for architectural education contexts to encourage embodied and spatial engagement among learners. There are two methods for this. In the first approach, hang or draw a simple Likert scale (-2 to +2) for each item. Participants mark their vote with a pen or dot. In the second version, distribute bright sticky notes and ask participants to hold them high (I like it), low by their knees (I hate it), or somewhere in between to vote for each item. Finally, gather participants' opinions for each item by asking around the room and estimating an average. This physical, interactive method supports socially situated learning by connecting bodily expression with cognitive evaluation during design critiques or collaborative workshops.

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Scenario Analysis



WHAT?

Scenario Analysis involves exploring and assessing potential future events or situations, predicting various feasible outcomes. These scenarios are essentially detailed hypothetical narratives, crafted to thoroughly examine specific aspects of a service offering. Rather than forecasting a single future, this approach embraces uncertainty and multiplicity—an especially useful stance in design education that values social complexity and contextual sensitivity. By constructing vivid stories about potential futures, this tool fosters shared understanding and facilitates meaningful discussions. Scenarios serve as valuable tools in the fields of strategy and management, but in the context of socially responsive pedagogy, they also become platforms for rehearsing action, considering consequences, and co-envisioning more just and inclusive futures.

WHY?

Scenario Analysis is commonly utilised for crisis planning, allowing organisations to realistically confront negative scenarios and prepare for adverse situations. However, this approach can also be applied proactively. Envisioning various possible futures fosters curiosity and innovation within a structured framework, enabling the assessment and mitigation of potential risks. During the delivery phase, Scenarios serve as a means to convey preferred outcomes to stakeholders, aiding their understanding and acceptance of the service vision. By narrating potential paths forward, this method helps bridge technical design processes with emotional and cultural resonance. Additionally, in the discover phase of projects, Scenarios can serve as inspirational tools, shaping decision-making by presenting imagined futures. In the development phase, Scenarios facilitate communication with partners and allow testing of “use cases” in a broader context.

WITH WHOM?

Educators and researchers lead the initiative, engaging learners alongside community residents, service clubs, and social collectives, with support from NGOs, government, donor organisations, and private and public institutions.

HOW?

To employ Scenario Analysis effectively, follow these five steps: Firstly, define the issue by determining your objectives or specifying the decision that needs to be made. Consider the timeframe, which depends on the scope of the plan you wish to assess. In socially responsive design, this means situating the issue within its real-world context—acknowledging who is affected and what social dynamics are at play. Secondly, gather relevant data and identify key factors, trends, and uncertainties that could impact the plan. Thirdly, distinguish between certainties and uncertainties. Some assumptions and trends might be confidently assumed, serving as “certainties.” Separate these from the “uncertainties,” which encompass trends and underlying factors that are less predictable. Fourthly, create scenarios by focusing on the most significant uncertainties. Develop both a moderately positive and a moderately negative scenario for each, blending your certainties with the chosen outcomes. Repeat this process for the next most crucial uncertainty. This step involves creative thinking, requiring you to outline a plausible chain of cause and effect. Finally, incorporate these Scenarios into your planning process, enabling you to make decisions while considering the most likely risks and rewards.

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SCAMPER (Substitute, Combine, Adapt, Modify, Put to Another Use, Eliminate and Rearrange)



WHAT?

SCAMPER represents a suite of creative tools crafted to encourage a distinctive approach to idea generation, facilitating the exploration of novel possibilities. Derived from the actions of Substitute, Combine, Adapt, Modify, Put to Another Use, Eliminate, and Rearrange, this acronym guides the transformation of objects or processes through a series of thought-provoking questions. This activity-based thinking process serves as a practical method to encourage individuals, particularly learners, to engage in innovative thinking beyond conventional boundaries. In architectural contexts, SCAMPER can be applied to buildings, urban spaces, and design systems, enabling learners to explore adaptive solutions and socially responsive modifications that consider community needs and environmental impact.

WHY?

SCAMPER serves as a tool to stimulate innovation within learners or a team by prompting a diverse perspective. By posing seven distinct types of questions, it facilitates the generation of innovative ideas and enhances the ability to refine existing buildings, spaces, problems, or concepts. This tool actively challenges the status quo, encouraging an exploration of new possibilities and guiding learners in analysing knowledge through a creative lens. In architectural pedagogy and practice, SCAMPER allows learners to critically explore and adapt existing design solutions while considering social, cultural, and environmental implications. By encouraging reflection on how a building, space, or system could be reimagined to better serve communities, the tool fosters socially responsive and context-aware innovation.

WITH WHOM?

Educators and researchers guide the process, connecting learners with experts.

HOW?

To employ this creative approach, begin by choosing an idea—whether it's an existing building, urban space, or something you wish to enhance. Next, randomly select any letter from the SCAMPER acronym; the specific letter is not crucial at this point. Each letter prompts specific questions: "S" for Substitute: Explore ways to make improvements by considering substitutions, such as altering colours, shapes, textures, or materials. Consider alternative uses for the idea. "C" for Combine: Examine how different elements of the design could be combined for optimization. Consider merging it with another idea. "A" for Adapt: Explore different applications for the product or idea. Identify existing solutions that can complement or enhance it. "M" for Modify: Investigate how specific aspects of the product or idea can be changed for improvement, including function, aesthetics, and other qualities. "P" for Put to Another Use: Delve into novel applications for the product, exploring possibilities for recycling or upcycling. "E" for Eliminate: Simplify the product by identifying elements that can be removed without compromising its function. "R" for Rearrange: Experiment with various arrangements of the product's components, emphasising different aspects. Lastly, sketch out your ideas quickly and persist beyond your initial concepts, using them as a starting point to explore new possibilities. SCAMPER helps designers explore innovative adaptations of spatial configurations, materials, and programmatic functions, encouraging creative iterations that balance aesthetics, functionality, and social or environmental considerations.

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Sequential Embedded Experimental Method



WHAT?

This mixed method approach involves combining quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis within an experimental quantitative research framework. It was specifically developed to merge Participatory Action Research and Design Thinking, providing an alternative research methodology in the field of architecture. This innovative mixed method design enables the incorporation of both quantitative and qualitative techniques in architectural research. On the quantitative front, researchers delve into experimental innovation by employing prototyping, effects measurements, and the evaluation process of architectural design. These methods are used not only to test outcomes but to critically explore how spatial interventions interact with lived experience and material context. Simultaneously, on the qualitative side, participatory activities engage stakeholders throughout the entire architectural creation process, known as Field Action Research. This sustained engagement centres the voices of community members, foregrounding social relationships, local narratives, and co-produced knowledge as essential components of design education and practice.

WHY?

It offers a profound understanding of architecture, emphasising its innovative design and its relevance to the social environment. By considering the social context, it uncovers the true essence of architecture, involving everyone within it. This approach proves invaluable as an assessment tool for various architectural engagements. As a strategic planning method, it defines architecture's role within society, fostering improved social conditions that engage all stakeholders. This transformation turns architecture into dynamic spaces where active participation thrives, encouraging the sharing of knowledge and empowering everyone involved. This transformation turns architecture into a co-produced and dynamic space of learning, negotiation, and action, where active participation thrives, shared knowledge circulates, and communities are empowered as co-authors of their built environment.

WITH WHOM?

Educators and researchers lead the initiative, engaging learners alongside community residents, service clubs, and social collectives, with support from NGOs, government, donor organisations, and private and public institutions.

HOW?

The approach comprises three main stages within a particular social context. In step one, initial field research is conducted through participatory activities, forming the foundation. This leads to step two, involving innovation via quantitative architectural prototyping, culminating in a proposal. Qualitative insights from participatory activities support this step. This integration ensures that experimental design solutions are informed not only by technical data but also by socially situated knowledge and values. The final third step involves evaluating the architecture once more through participatory action. If executed effectively, these steps have the potential to create innovative designs.

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Situated and Critical Storytelling in Design Studio



WHAT?

Storytelling, in its dictionary meanings, is the activity of telling stories. Its verbal form, which often involves improvisation, theatrics and embellishment, is known to be the oldest activity of social sharing of culture and knowledge. As such storytelling is enacted as a means of entertainment, education, and passing on society's moral values. Hence the need for a critical approach. A critical use of Storytelling as a method in architectural design education provides tools for an engaged and reflective kind of learning, helping learners question norms, power structures, and assumptions in design practice. A critical use of Storytelling as a method in architectural design education may provide tools for an engaged kind of learning. Situated and Critical Storytelling is a method that questions the established norms of knowledge and learning. It is a method developed in feminist literature, history, ethnography, and lately in architectural design, in order to raise awareness of the power hierarchies that produce dominant knowledge, silencing all other knowledges. Feminist practices claim critical and creative forms of storytelling, as this practice shows us that knowledge is always multiple and fragmented and knowledge changes according to where and who the teller is. Acknowledging the specific situation a story is told suggests accountability and criticality. A Situated and Critical Storytelling requires one to take an ethical position, question the ways in which storytelling produces knowledge, and avoid harmful practice and content.

WHY?

Storytelling works in various ways in architectural design education, in providing an engaged educational environment, in working at a site, and in imagining new and alternative architectures. Storytelling is employed in situated pedagogies, for engagement and building a learning community. A sense of collectivity and participation may be achieved through sharing similar concerns and encouraging differences. The participants of the educational environment, where storytelling is employed critically, become aware that there is no single truth, but knowledge is always situated. This raises awareness for multiple agencies in architectural design and its education. Learners are invited to consider others' stories in the design process, especially those of whom have been silenced systematically. This approach suggests an open understanding of site in architectural design, where we consider local knowledges as well as the expert knowledge of architects. By incorporating Situated and Critical Storytelling, the design studio evolves into a platform for dialogue and negotiation, where architectural proposals are shaped not only by technical criteria but also by empathy, inclusivity, and recognition of diverse narratives.

WITH WHOM?

Educators and researchers guide the process, connecting learners with experts.

HOW?

Structure Storytelling exercises in progressive steps. Begin with small-group sessions where learners share personal reflections on the site or context, guided by prompts that emphasise observation, emotion, or social relevance. Complement this by actively collecting stories from external participants—local residents, workers, or other stakeholders—through interviews, guided walks, or participatory activities. Next, conduct collaborative exercises that merge these narratives into visual, spatial, or material expressions, such as model-making, sketching, or digital collages. Encourage rotation of roles—some participants act as narrators, others as listeners or recorders—to cultivate empathy and attention to multiple perspectives. Debrief collectively, discussing how these narratives reveal hidden social, environmental, or cultural dimensions of the site. Integrate insights from these stories directly into design decisions, ensuring that the process is iterative: story collection informs design, and design choices create new opportunities for narrative exploration. Both educators and learners may share their personal stories, be it fictional or factual, in order to encourage participation and awareness of the uniqueness of each voice. Here, it is important that the educator is also a part of the Storytelling process for a more open communication. Listening to locals' stories suggests the possibility of other stories which could not be voiced or which we could not have access to. Therefore, we need to consider ways of encouraging others to tell their stories by participatory methods. We may invent playful tactics to share experiences and stories, such as collaborating in everyday activities with locals and playing collective games with learners in the design studio. Other vocabularies, literary genres, media, materials and tectonics have to be utilised to tell other stories. For example, avoiding discriminative vocabulary which privileges a certain gender, questioning idealised architectural building norms, and acknowledging different bodily forms and non-human inhabitants help in telling other stories than the dominant ones. We may challenge oppressive hierarchies and dichotomies by telling stories about architectures that collaborate with natural forces rather than fights them and that utilises new materials and architectural details. We may incorporate telling stories in the design process to be able to go beyond the divide between experts and members of the society.

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Six Thinking Hats



WHAT?

The Six Thinking Hats, created by Edward de Bono, constitute a tool for both group discussions and individual contemplation, utilising six distinct coloured hats. This concept offers groups a method to examine ideas from various perspectives. In the context of providing feedback, these thinking hats serve as diverse lenses for constructive peer evaluation of ideas and concepts. During team sessions, members present their ideas or ongoing projects to the group, and designated individuals offer feedback based on one of de Bono's thinking hats. Each hat corresponds to a specific thinking strategy. Applied to architectural education and design, the Six Thinking Hats can guide learners in evaluating design proposals from multiple perspectives—such as emotional, factual, creative, or critical—enhancing collaborative critique and fostering balanced decision-making in studio projects.

WHY?

The Six Thinking Hats facilitates a thorough examination of decisions or problems by encouraging consideration of diverse perspectives. This approach ensures a deliberate exploration of aspects that might be overlooked, ultimately enhancing the quality and resilience of your decision. It promotes a more organised thought process, aiding in the efficient and accurate evaluation of information. Additionally, this tool fosters improved creativity and the development of essential thinking skills such as curiosity, critical thinking, and effective communication through listening, questioning, and answering. Consequently, it enhances your persuasiveness, ability to identify when others need support, and confidence in resolving conflicts. Finally, it promotes greater inclusivity in teams by requiring individuals to temporarily set aside preconceptions and focus on a shared perspective. In design-related contexts, the method can be particularly effective in bridging gaps between technical, aesthetic, and social dimensions of a project, ensuring that proposals are both imaginative and grounded.

WITH WHOM?

Educators and researchers guide the process, connecting learners with community residents, social collectives, and experts.

HOW?

Initially, it's crucial to understand the significance of each hat, as they symbolise six distinct thinking strategies identified by Edward de Bono. The red hat signifies emotional thinking, involving feelings, hunches, and intuition; the yellow hat represents brightness and positive thinking; the black hat embodies critical thinking, including judgement and cynicism; the White Hat corresponds to information and facts; the green hat embodies creative thinking, encompassing creativity and possibility; and the blue hat symbolises the big picture, involving process and control. Keep in mind that in this activity, participants will utilise these hats to provide feedback on ideas or works in progress. In a workshop setting, have participants present their ideas or concepts to each other either in teams or individually. Prior to each presentation, distribute different hats (whether real hats, stickers, or sheets of paper) to audience members, ensuring their relevance to the content and session's purpose. Each hat-wearer should view the presentation through the lens of their assigned hat. Following the presentation, invite feedback from the hat-wearers. After each presentation, redistribute the hats so that different members of the group have the opportunity to give their opinions from different perspectives. Each thinking hat serves as a distinct lens, perspective, or style of thinking. In a group setting, you can assign hats to everyone for a well-rounded discussion or explore different perspectives as a collective. In architecture and urban design, it helps teams critically and creatively evaluate projects by systematically shifting perspectives—from technical data and structural feasibility to emotional resonance, societal impact, and long-term vision—leading to more balanced and multidimensional design outcomes.

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Speed Dating Design Method



WHAT?

Speed Dating involves introducing numerous potential ideas to a target audience without committing to any specific one. This approach enables design and research teams to gather early feedback during the ideation phase, preventing unnecessary expenditure of time, money, and resources on solutions that may not align with user needs. The method employs techniques such as storyboards and user enactments to uncover gaps in each idea. Design teams immerse participants in a familiar scenario and introduce a new idea, offering a glimpse into a possible future that could transform the familiar situation. Speed Dating allows learners to quickly test diverse design concepts within socially situated contexts, helping them understand how architecture interacts with real communities. By rapidly exploring multiple potential scenarios, design teams assist participants in reflecting on their experiences, aiding the transition from what could be to what should be.

WHY?

This approach proves incredibly handy for testing a wide variety of ideas at an early stage, engaging directly with a target audience. Often, design teams might overlook certain user needs and unexpected nuances during the ideation phase. By rapidly exploring a limited number of narratives, design teams can swiftly assess, refine, and gain a profound understanding of their fieldwork observations. Speed Dating facilitates a thorough exploration of design possibilities and concerns, as participants can reflect and share fresh insights that might not have surfaced during fieldwork alone. It's important to remember that Speed Dating isn't meant for ranking ideas; rather, it serves as a valuable tool for addressing these overlooked aspects during the ideation process, guiding the team toward more suitable and refined solutions. This process encourages learners to confront diverse spatial needs and societal realities early in the design process, sharpening their sensitivity to local contexts. It also cultivates collaborative dialogue, allowing emerging architects to test the social viability of their design intentions in an inclusive and responsive manner.

WITH WHOM?

Educators and researchers lead the initiative, engaging learners alongside community residents, service clubs, and social collectives, with support from NGOs, government, donor organisations, and private and public institutions.

HOW?

In the early stages of a design or a research project, engaging your users in brief, focused sessions can provide valuable feedback on your concepts. Here's a user-friendly approach: First, begin with thorough research, including user interviews, surveys, and comment analysis. Consolidate the gathered ideas and potential user needs into key points. Second, generate diverse concepts aimed at addressing these needs. During this brainstorming phase, let creativity flow without restrictions, considering these ideas as potential matches for your users. Third, invite your users to interact with these concepts. Guide them through scenarios using visual aids like storyboards or drawings. Encourage them to express their preferences and reasons behind their choices. This interactive exploration helps uncover valuable insights into user preferences and boundaries. This step may involve testing spatial configurations or uses of public space with local stakeholders, highlighting lived experience as a critical design input. Fourth, after multiple sessions, analyse the gathered feedback and transcripts to identify patterns and insights. These insights can validate your assumptions, reveal new directions, or refine the problem based on deeper user needs. Fifth, armed with these insights, refine your product solution or develop a new one tailored to user needs. Ensure your solution aligns seamlessly with these needs and respects the subtle boundaries that contribute to a positive user experience. This approach not only engages users effectively but also guides your development in the right direction.

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Stokes



WHAT?

Stokes are engaging warm-up activities or games, strategically employed to ignite creativity and prepare individuals for collaborative design work. Whether introduced at the outset of a workshop or design sprint to establish a positive mindset and behavioural norms, or used to cultivate specific attitudes before distinct phases of the process, these brief activities play a crucial role. Additionally, they contribute to team bonding, fostering a sense of familiarity and ease, facilitating smooth transitions between different modes of work. In architectural education and design studios, Stokes can be used to energise learners, encourage creative thinking, and foster collaborative dynamics before engaging in ideation, prototyping, or spatial problem-solving activities.

WHY?

Beyond their entertaining and educational aspects, Stokes serve as keys to unlocking a team's creative and collaborative potential. They prove to be effective tools for managing group dynamics, addressing minor conflicts within the team, and revitalising the team when faced with creative or decision fatigue. Stoke activities play a key role in helping teams to switch off, activating both mentally and physically. Incorporate Stoke activities when energy levels drop, at the beginning of the day to energise, to start a meeting or before a brainstorming session. The contrast in outcomes between conducting a brainstorming session with or without a stoke beforehand can be truly remarkable. These activities not only stimulate creativity but also enhance team members' engagement with one another. In architectural pedagogy, they can be particularly valuable in studio contexts, where playful, energising activities help reframe design challenges, foster social cohesion, and situate creativity within a collaborative learning environment.

WITH WHOM?

Experts guide the process, connecting learners with community residents, social collectives, educators and researchers.

HOW?

An effective Stoke activity not only boosts energy but also demands active engagement, attentive listening, critical thinking, and participation from each individual. Numerous examples exist, and here are three intriguing warm-up activities. First, “This is a feather”: Form a circle and stand up. Someone, preferably the facilitator, starts by presenting an imaginary object (e.g., a feather) and declares what it is before passing it to the next person. The recipient inspects the imaginary object and takes one of two actions. If they believe it’s still the same object, they declare “This is a feather,” and pass it to the next person. If they think it has transformed, they announce the new identity (e.g., “This is a leaf”) and pass it forward. Repeat for several rounds. Second, “Wise sage”: The goal is to generate wild and absurd ideas. Stand in a circle, designate one person to begin, and go around the circle, with each person contributing only one word. Once a phrase is collectively constructed, everyone nods and exclaims, “so wise, so wise, so wise,” or “yes, yes, yes.” Repeat the process. Third, “Yes, Let’s”: Move around the room randomly, and then one person can propose an idea, such as “Let’s pretend we’re all at the beach” or “Let’s be giraffes.” Everyone responds in unison with, “Yes, let’s,” and proceeds to act out the suggestion. At any point, someone else can shout out the next proposal, and the response is always, “Yes, let’s!” In architecture and urban design contexts, stoke activities can serve as energising icebreakers before collaborative workshops or design charrettes. They help loosen hierarchies, spark imagination, and encourage participants to embrace playful thinking—essential for generating unconventional ideas and fostering creative group dynamics.

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Storyboarding



WHAT?

A Storyboard is essentially a visual narrative composed of drawings or images illustrating a specific sequence of events. Whether depicting everyday situations in a space or conceptualising new spatial designs, this tool serves as a powerful aid in predicting and exploring user interactions within diverse environments. In socially situated architecture, Storyboards help visualise how people with different social positions experience space differently over time. Its ability to capture attention, convey emotions, and contextualise experiences is invaluable in guiding various actions during the design process. Through Storyboards, designers can deeply engage with the user's perspective, crafting a human-centred narrative that enriches the design journey.

WHY?

Storyboards play a crucial role in design by incorporating user experiences into the creative process. They serve as a means to encapsulate the essence of people's interactions with urban spaces or architectural prototypes. These visual narratives provoke in-depth analysis, sparking conversations about potential challenges and opportunities in design. Crafting Storyboards also compels designers to step into the users' shoes, fostering a more empathetic design perspective. This visual storytelling approach is powerful because images and narratives carry a greater impact than mere words. They foster emotional connections, making the information more memorable and accessible, as anyone can quickly grasp the narrative flow at a glance. In this way, Storyboards support inclusive, justice-oriented design by helping learners and practitioners identify barriers, imagine alternatives, and communicate design ideas through grounded, human-centred perspectives.

WITH WHOM?

The tool is developed by educators and researchers, involving learners and supported by private and public institutions.

HOW?

Storyboards often take the form of comic strips, in which designers develop a sequence of illustrations depicting the situation under consideration. In this approach, designers strive to include intricate contextual details, ensuring easy comprehension for viewers. In socially situated architecture, Storyboards should intentionally reflect diverse social realities and spatial inequalities, incorporating perspectives that are often left out of traditional design narratives. When applied in collaborative environments, the purpose of the Storyboard is to succinctly capture the essential elements of the situation. This usually involves the presentation of a concise illustrated scenario, which portrays the space in use and explores various outcomes. Scenarios might depict, for example, how a person with limited mobility navigates public space, how a community responds to redevelopment, or how informal settlements adapt to changing urban policies. This visual narrative serves as a catalyst for discussions between architects, learners and inhabitants, encouraging conversations about what works and what doesn't in design. The process involves several steps: first, gather data; second, select a scenario; third, sketch the story; fourth, create scenes steeped in emotion and detailed descriptions. Encouraging participants to start sketching ideas as soon as possible can ignite their creativity; waiting to have fully developed stories before putting pen to paper can stifle imaginative thinking.

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Storytelling



WHAT?

The term storytelling is a compound word that combines the action of “telling” with the concept of a “story.” It represents a method of teaching that is rich in meaning, described by many scholars as a form of narrative expression that blends phenomenological, critical, and conventional pedagogies to enhance the overall learning experience. This approach not only promotes understanding, but allows learners to explore new avenues of learning. Storytelling encompasses seven specific learning styles: linguistic, logical, spatial, musical, kinaesthetic, interpersonal and intrapersonal. In architectural education and practice, Storytelling can be used to convey design intentions, narrate user experiences, and communicate spatial concepts, helping learners and designers frame their projects in meaningful, human-centred narratives.

WHY?

Storytelling develops three fundamental aspects: creativity, communication, and reflection. Creativity is presented as the outcome, while communication and reflection can be engaged as learning activities. It proves valuable in stimulating critical thinking, fostering self-reflection, and unveiling practical truths. In the realm of architectural education, it serves as a narrative learning approach for contemplating spaces. It enhances learners’ creativity by guiding them to craft spatial designs cohesively through their personal stories. By narrating stories, learners reassess their own life experiences and skills, learning to discern key themes in other texts. They can start from a concrete idea from their experiences to develop a story and understand various methods of transforming it into a three-dimensional representation in a cohesive way. This approach transcends mere form-focused learning, evolving into an architectural space that takes into account spatial experience and sequence. Ultimately, Storytelling bridges the subjective and the collective, enabling learners to communicate architectural intentions in ways that resonate both emotionally and conceptually.

WITH WHOM?

Educators and researchers guide the process, connecting learners with experts.

HOW?

Storytelling as a pedagogical method in architecture education can take various forms. The following is an example that can be implemented in a classroom setting. Firstly, initiate the process with an in-depth interpretation of the place and context through research. Concentrate on delving into the narrative of the place, understanding its character, and identifying its distinctive features based on research. The interpretation of these stories becomes a key element in the narrative. Next, transition to the mapping of the place. Once a comprehensive understanding of the place is acquired, collect the most impactful information on-site, incorporating scientific data, detailed human information, and other relevant data into a mapping exercise. Subsequently, synthesise all this information into an artistic collage, which serves as the foundational reference for the entire design. Moving forward, progress from mapping to a narrative concept. Use the collected materials to shape a design concept that encapsulates the story of the place. Reflect deeply on the narrative of the place to cultivate a concept that will drive the development. Once the narrative concept is established, return to the site and begin the storytelling. Translate the narrative concept into a tangible building by integrating the components, composition, and formulation of the structure based on the narrative concept. Subsequently, infuse the building with Storytelling through details. The intricacies and elements of the building can reflect the narrative, offering viewers a more patient and microscopic experience of the architectural narrative. Lastly, employ collage expression to articulate the narrative concept. In the field of narrative architecture, collage emerges as a suitable and direct method of conveying its effects visually. Use collage as a means to express both narrative concepts and the essence of narrative buildings.

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SWOT Analysis



WHAT?

A SWOT Analysis serves as a valuable tool for organising information collected during a profile/diagnostic phase. It enables project teams, including learners and researchers, as well as broader stakeholder groups, to engage in discussions, prioritise issues, and reach agreements on the challenges faced by the community/user. This analytical method categorises significant internal factors (strengths and weaknesses) and external factors (opportunities and threats). In the context of a socially situated teaching architecture, it supports collaborative reflection on community-rooted knowledge and learning environments. Originally designed for business and industry, this method finds equal applicability in community health, development, education, and personal growth efforts.

WHY?

Conducting a SWOT Analysis proves effective in addressing crucial and challenging inquiries. It involves assessing data and information about the present scenario from two angles: internal aspects (strengths and weaknesses) and external factors (opportunities and threats). Gaining a comprehensive awareness of the situation aids in strategic planning and decision-making. A deeper understanding of the factors influencing your initiative provides a foundation for informed action. This insight enables the identification of issues or challenges targeted by your project, the establishment or reaffirmation of goals, and the formulation of an action plan. Its participatory nature supports place-based pedagogies and co-created knowledge practices that are central to community-engaged learning.

WITH WHOM?

Educators and researchers lead the initiative, engaging learners alongside community residents, service clubs, and social collectives, with support from NGOs, government, and private and public institutions.

HOW?

After verifying the data and creating thematic maps to illustrate the spatial distribution of information in urban settings, a SWOT Analysis can be initiated. It is most effective when conducted within working groups through a facilitated workshop. The workshop should follow these steps: Firstly, an introduction is given where relevant information is visually displayed and explained to participants. A matrix is prepared on a flip chart or a large sheet of paper, with empty columns for Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats. Secondly, a brainstorming session takes place. Participants review the data and engage in discussions within smaller working groups. Comments and opinions are noted down in the matrix, initially including all comments made during the session. These sessions are designed to recognise the diversity of lived experiences and validate multiple ways of knowing, particularly those grounded in local and cultural contexts. Thirdly, a review and prioritisation process occur. In a subsequent round, participants discuss each statement, eliminate duplicates or irrelevant points by consensus, and add any other pertinent information. Fourthly, conclusions are drawn. A general conclusion for each thematic area is drafted, and a final assessment of the area is developed. Fifthly, an overall assessment is conducted. Once all working groups have reached conclusions for each thematic area, the information is compiled into a final summary chart, serving as a condensed version of the situation analysis. Sixthly, a final report is generated based on the respective matrices for each thematic area and the final summary chart. This report includes a summary with additional information and data. It may also incorporate maps or plans to enhance comprehension.

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System Mapping



WHAT?

Systems Mapping involves the creation of visual representations that illustrate the relationships, feedback loops, actors, and trends within a given system. The purpose of Systems Mapping is to offer a simplified conceptual grasp of a complex system, facilitating a shared understanding among collaborators for collective action. Embracing systems thinking needs a shift in our perception of the surrounding world. To develop a new multidimensional thinking framework, it becomes imperative to uncover the dynamics and interconnected nature of the systems at work. Systems Mapping can support architecture learners in visualising how social, spatial, political, and environmental forces interact within specific urban or territorial contexts. This is where Systems Mapping tools prove invaluable—they aid in exploring the system, conveying understanding, and facilitating the identification of knowledge gaps, intervention points, and insights. This method also encourages a participatory and inclusive design process, where diverse community actors are positioned not as passive users but as active system participants. There are several types of System Mapping, such as Cluster Maps or Interconnected Circle Maps.

WHY?

Examining complexity through mapping allows us to perceive and comprehend the intricate connections among the components within a system, revealing a larger, more integrated whole. The conduct of each element is influenced by the exchange of information, resources, and people among them. These exchanges have the power to either amplify or diminish the behaviour of each component. Mapping complexity aids in foreseeing unexpected or surprising behaviours as changes occur within the system. It's essential to recognise the close relationship between mental models and systems. People hold mental frameworks shaped by their knowledge and experiences, delineating their perception of how things operate. When used in community-engaged design studios, this method helps reveal conflicting or overlapping worldviews, enhancing dialogue across diverse social groups. By collaboratively sharing and evaluating these mental models within a group, members can collectively develop a comprehensive understanding of how the entire system operates.

WITH WHOM?

The activity is initiated by educators and researchers, involving learners alongside community residents, with the support of experts.

HOW?

To create a System Map, start with a large sheet of paper and markers of different colours to explore various elements of the system. Choose a central theme (e.g., “poverty,” “urban informality,” or “inequality”) and have everyone in the group contribute to the map using their own pen. Generate ideas freely, connecting concepts and creating a visual representation of the system. Once the page is filled with diverse concepts, draw connections between them. Use different colours to indicate various flows or relationships, such as “power” and “government.” Keep expanding the map until it becomes a complex yet interconnected array of lines and words. Finally, key areas of interconnectedness are identified and three new ideas that have emerged from the collaborative mapping process are extracted. The aim is to visually represent and understand the intricacies of the system being explored. This method helps to highlight how architectural interventions intersect with broader systemic conditions, such as access, governance, and historical context.

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Synectics



WHAT?

Coined by William Gordon in 1961, Synectics refers to the fusion of apparently unrelated elements. This approach involves working with problem analogies and situating them in a seemingly unconnected environment. The term originates from the Greek roots “syn” (together) and “ectics” (bringing forth), reflecting the idea of “bringing together different elements.” The purpose of Synectics is to make the unfamiliar seem familiar and vice versa. It is built on three key principles: the teachability of the creative process, the shared mental processes underlying creativity in both arts and sciences, and the analogy between individual and group creativity. Within the framework of Synectics, there are three distinct roles: the facilitator oversees the process without dictating content, the recipient owns the problem, and the participants contribute their ideas regarding the issue at hand. In architectural education and design practice, Synectics encourages learners and designers to combine seemingly unrelated concepts, materials, or spatial ideas to generate innovative design solutions and explore unconventional approaches to architectural challenges.

WHY?

Built on the premise that individuals exhibit greater creativity when they comprehend the mechanics of creativity, the Synectics method fosters “out-of-the-box” thinking, particularly beneficial when a team encounters a standstill and struggles to identify solutions. It thrives in smaller groups, typically ranging from 7 to 10 people, although it remains adaptable for teams of any size. Moreover, the process is stimulating and often infused with humour, while achieving meaningful results. The fun comes when participants develop analogies for the problem at hand, drawing inspiration from a variety of settings or situations of their choice. In architectural education and practice, Synectics encourages learners to explore design challenges from multiple perspectives, integrating social, spatial, and environmental considerations while generating innovative and context-sensitive solutions.

WITH WHOM?

Educators and researchers guide the process, connecting learners with community residents, social collectives, and experts.

HOW?

The initial procedure comprised approximately eight phases. Firstly, the team is presented with the problem. Secondly, there is an analysis stage where a detailed understanding of the problem emerges. Thirdly, the purge stage involves a discussion of immediately available solutions in one's mind. The fourth stage is the problem-as-understood stage, during which each person articulates their understanding of the problem in writing. The fifth stage involves evocative questions, prompting responses in the form of metaphors or analogies. Various types of analogies are considered, including "direct analogy," where one identifies knowledge or information on a similar problem; "personal analogy," involving role-playing to imagine another person's perspective; "symbolic analogy," requiring the team to convey the "essence" or emotional response to a given keyword in one or two words; and "fantasy Analogy," encouraging imaginative generation of optimal solutions with less emphasis on feasibility. Moving forward, the sixth stage is the examination stage, wherein a potential solution, based on analogies, is chosen and scrutinised for factual grounding. The seventh stage, force-fit, focuses on how to compel a solution to align with the problem. Finally, in the eighth viewpoint stage, analogies and solutions contribute to viewing the problem from fresh perspectives. This may unveil new opportunities or reveal that a solution does not address the problem, leading to a restart of the process, called an excursion. In architectural pedagogy, Synectics can be enacted by having learners physically map analogies into sketches, models, or quick 3D mock-ups, testing how metaphorical associations translate into spatial or material proposals. In practice settings, teams can assign each analogy type to different stakeholders and rotate roles to surface overlooked insights. In this way, Synectics becomes a structured yet playful method for moving from metaphor to tangible, situated design actions.

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Value Proposition Canvas



WHAT?

The Value Proposition Canvas can be a powerful strategic tool in architectural education, helping learners understand how to align their design proposals with the real needs and expectations of users. Originally developed for businesses, this framework is equally valuable for architects seeking to create user-centred spaces. It comprises two main components: the “customer profile,” which explores users’ goals, pains, and needs; and the “value map,” which outlines how a design responds to those aspects. By using this tool, architecture learners learn to go beyond formal and aesthetic considerations and instead ground their proposals in social relevance and practical value. Its core objective is to encourage a deep understanding of the challenges users face, fostering a design approach that delivers meaningful, context-sensitive solutions.

WHY?

Learners can gain a holistic understanding of the value their design proposals bring to users by applying this tool. This deep understanding not only helps them identify opportunities to improve the relevance and impact of their projects, but also teaches them to clearly communicate the purpose and benefits of their designs to diverse stakeholders. To enhance this process, they can draw on a range of methods commonly used in design thinking and participatory planning—such as user profiling, context analysis, SWOT analysis, and engagement tools like surveys or focus groups with future occupants or community members. These techniques enrich their ability to align architectural solutions with real human needs.

WITH WHOM?

Community residents, social collectives, and service clubs take part together with educators and learners, supported by NGOs, researchers, donor organisations, government, and private and public institutions.

HOW?

It is crucial to truly understand the needs of users by observing and engaging with them directly. This process involves two key components: the customer profile and the value map. The customer profile focuses on understanding the specific needs of users and how architecture can meet them, breaking down into customer jobs (the tasks or challenges users face in their environments), gains (the positive experiences or benefits users seek), and pains (the frustrations or problems they encounter). The Value Proposition Canvas then aligns design solutions with these needs through gain creators (how the design enhances user experience), pain relievers (how it addresses user difficulties), and the specific architectural proposals offered.

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World Café



WHAT?

The World Café represents a deliberate approach to fostering a dynamic network of conversations that address significant issues. This method creates an atmosphere similar to that of a café, where participants discuss a particular issue or topic in small groups around café tables. Periodically, participants shift to new tables, with one host from each table providing a concise summary of the previous discussion to the incoming guests. This deliberate movement ensures a cross-fertilization of ideas, enriching ongoing conversations with insights from earlier interactions. The culmination of the process involves a plenary session where the key concepts are distilled, and possibilities for subsequent actions are explored. Serving as a creative tool, the World Café facilitates genuine conversations in groups of various sizes. In architectural pedagogy, the World Café can integrate community voices into design discussions, fostering socially situated learning and encouraging learners to consider the societal impacts of architectural decisions.

WHY?

This approach assists us in recognising how we learn, share knowledge, derive meaning, and collectively shape our futures within the vibrant networks of conversation we partake in. It operates on the premise that individuals inherently possess the wisdom and creativity to confront even the most challenging issues. With the right context and focus, members can tap into this profound knowledge about what truly matters. The World Café process has demonstrated its aptitude for engaging large groups in genuine dialogues, fostering innovative thinking, and exploring actionable possibilities concerning real-life issues and questions. It serves as a powerful tool for facilitating authentic conversations, whether among individuals meeting for the first time or in conducting thorough explorations of pivotal strategic challenges or opportunities. Additionally, it creates a meaningful interaction between a speaker and the audience. In architectural education and practice, the World Café method enables learners and stakeholders to collaboratively explore spatial challenges, share diverse perspectives, and co-create socially responsive design solutions.

WITH WHOM?

Educators and researchers lead the initiative, engaging learners alongside community residents, service clubs, and social collectives, with support from NGOs, government, donor organisations, and private and public institutions.

HOW?

The World Café is a dynamic forum where participants discuss in depth and express their creativity in small groups or “tables” during several consecutive sessions of 20-30 minutes each. The unique aspect of the Café lies in the intentional movement of participants between tables after each session, encouraging a vibrant exchange of ideas and perspectives—an intentional “cross-fertilisation” process. The event reaches its culmination in a plenary session, providing a platform for synthesising key ideas and drawing conclusive insights. To effectively conduct a Café, meticulous preparation is essential. This involves appointing a skilled facilitator to uphold dialogue guidelines, articulating the purpose and focus of the Café conversation, and assigning an inviting name to the event. Additionally, participants are thoughtfully invited, and attention is given to creating a hospitable space that fosters an atmosphere of informality and intimacy, ensuring everyone feels free to express their most creative thoughts. The Café event itself unfolds in progressive rounds, with facilitators guiding discussions as each table collectively explores a designated question. As the rounds progress, participants may choose to return to their original tables or venture into new discussions, deepening the conversation and often leading to a more open reception of diverse ideas. The concluding phase involves making the overarching pattern visible to all participants through a reflective and collaborative conversation between individual tables and the entire group. This prompts participants to consider and share the most meaningful occurrences during the event, adding a layer of introspection and synthesis to the entire experience. Within architectural pedagogy, the World Café can be adapted to foreground socially situated practices by framing discussion questions around lived urban experiences, community narratives, or contested spaces.

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International Summer School, Brescia 2023

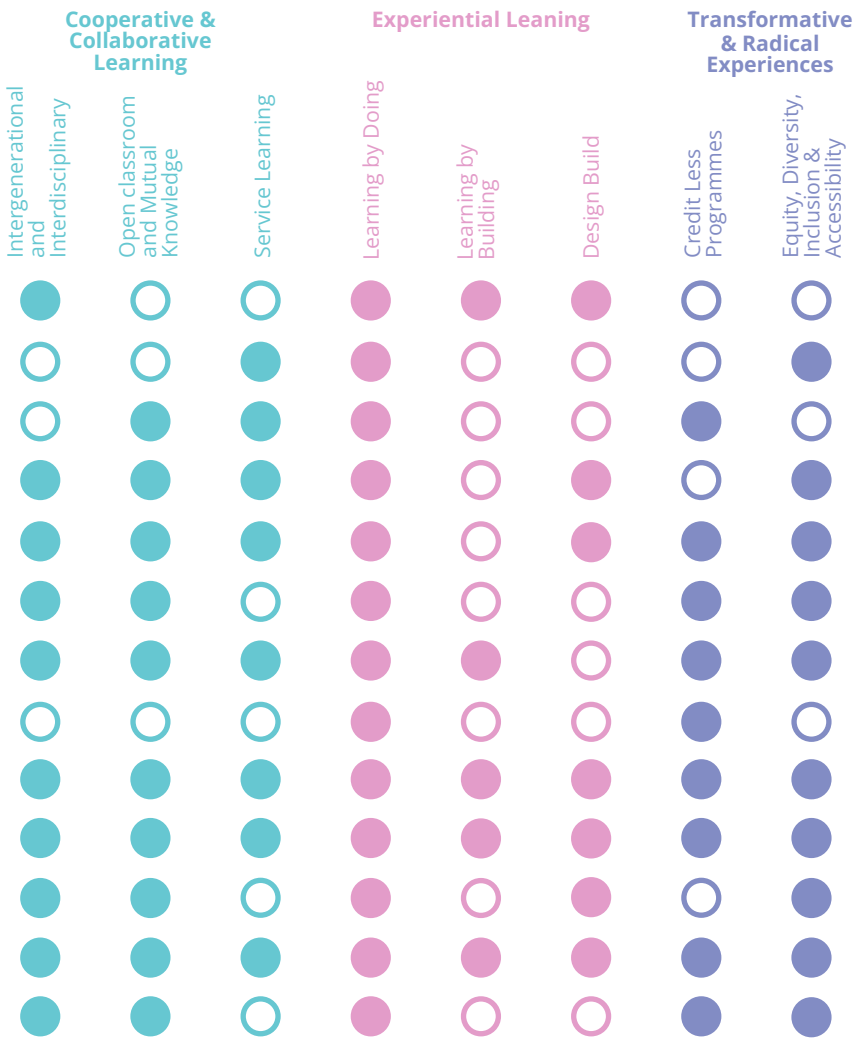
IMPLEMENTATION STAGE

Planning

**Solution Testing
Review Activities
Review Strategies
Evaluate
Evolve**

INDEX BY CATEGORIES AND SUBCATEGORIES

1:1 Scale Prototyping or Testing Prototype	188
Democracy Cube	190
Expert Panels	192
Ladder of Participation	194
Novelty, Attractiveness, Feasibility Study (NAF)	196
Peer to Peer	198
Pop-up Infrastructure	200
Self-Evaluation in Architectural Design Studios	202
Small Experiments or Simulations	204
Socially Situated Crit	206
Socially Situated Live Projects	208
Student Evaluation Survey	210
Students Tutor	212



1:1 Scale Prototyping or Testing Prototype



WHAT?

1:1 Scale Prototypes have played a crucial role in driving architectural innovation. Their primary use involves testing and refining various aspects of buildings, typically throughout the design and construction phases. Prototyping is a subset of model making, where physical models facilitate the examination and analysis of the geometric form of a design. This is particularly valuable as it allows for a comprehensive evaluation that may be challenging to achieve through sketches, layouts, 3D models, or cardboard models alone. In instances where constructing for testing purposes is impractical, an alternative solution is to create a mock-up test by building a segment of the overall design on-site. This allows for the investigation of unconventional building materials, user behaviour, or the examination of technical solutions. Constructing a 1:1 Prototyping Scale model is essential for verifying sample selections, demonstrating aesthetic considerations, and assessing the quality of materials and execution. This stage serves as a preliminary step in the construction process, functioning as an invaluable tool to ensure the feasibility of the design. These prototypes play a crucial role in determining whether processes that seem practical on paper translate equally well into reality or if modifications are necessary. Additionally, they serve as testing and assessment tools.

WHY?

The 1:1 Scale Prototyping emerges as a fundamental stage in the design process. Even the most skilled designers cannot accurately predict how a sketch or diagram will interact with and function within a given space. Consequently, this method of prototyping serves as a primary and significant opportunity for reflecting on a design's strengths and limitations, providing a valuable chance for contemplating further enhancements. The creation of full 1:1 Scale Prototypes enables a tangible experience of the design's impact on the space, allowing for the sensory engagement with the objects themselves. This immersive approach involves more senses than a drawing can possibly evoke, providing a comprehensive understanding of the design's effect. When focused on socially situated practices, 1:1 Scale Prototypes offer significant advantages. They enable targeted users, who may struggle to fully comprehend the design's impact through sketches or smaller scale models, to visualise and experience the final results in a tangible manner. This direct interaction facilitates a more accurate assessment of the design's implications on their environment and daily lives. Furthermore, in some cases, the creation of a full-scale prototype can be immediately implemented to enhance existing facilities that are in poor condition, thereby ameliorating the everyday living conditions of the users. This pragmatic approach not only validates the design concept but also contributes to immediate, real-world improvements, reinforcing the practical and social benefits of the project.

WITH WHOM?

Educators and researchers guide the process, connecting learners with key stakeholders for collaborative activities.

HOW?

Creating 1:1 Scale Prototypes in architecture can be achieved through various methods, with traditional and 3D printing being common approaches. Collaborative brainstorming with a team serves as an effective means to generate ideas in the early ideation phase. Subsequently, the idea is translated into a tangible form through sketching or Computer-Aided Design (CAD). Utilising software like CAD, Grasshopper, or Rhinoceros facilitates the creation of a 3D replica, providing a virtual simulation that includes dimensions and aids in refining the model. This approach, often rooted in additive manufacturing, offers a rapid solution for gaining early insights into the physical form by building up layers of material. Following the virtual representation, the next step involves producing a physical product prototype, aiming for a version closely resembling the final product. Common methods for this include 3D printing or traditional construction techniques. Once the prototype is realised, the crucial phase of testing begins. Real users interact with the model to identify any potential issues, allowing for adjustments to meet users' needs and expectations in the final object or building. To maximise the prototype's power and integrate user feedback into design adjustments, it's essential to access information gathered from users. This can be achieved through observations, note-taking, or photography to document how people interact with the prototypes. Additionally, engaging users in discussions about their feelings regarding the spaces or objects, their utilisation, and their desires for potential improvements provides valuable insights that can inform the final design.

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Democracy Cube



WHAT?

The Democracy Cube serves as a conceptual framework for analysing the key design variations in present-day participatory institutions. It presents a three-dimensional model that delves into participatory mechanisms tailored to address contemporary governance challenges, specifically focusing on authority, participants, and communication modes. In socially situated architectural pedagogies, the Democracy Cube becomes a valuable tool for evaluating and structuring participation in spatial decision-making and design processes. This comprehensive typology uses three axes: the first axis represents the authority and influence of participants in the process, the second axis outlines the entities involved in the process, and the third axis shows the decision-making process. This framework can guide architecture learners and educators in understanding how different participatory design settings—such as community workshops, charrettes, or urban forums—vary in terms of power distribution, inclusiveness, and dialogue. Through this tool, the variations in participatory mechanisms are shown across three crucial dimensions: the individuals involved, the methods of communication and decision-making among participants, and the integration of discussions with policy or public action. Applying this model in architectural education fosters critical reflection on how participatory structures either enable or limit genuine community involvement in shaping the built environment.

WHY?

It proves beneficial because principles like equal influence in collective decisions and respect for individual autonomy tend to be too abstract for offering practical guidance on the goals and nature of citizen participation. A more constructive approach involves examining the spectrum of immediate values that participation mechanisms could promote and the issues they aim to address. Additionally, mechanisms of direct participation shouldn't be seen as a strict replacement for political representation or expertise; rather, they should be seen as complementary. This balance is crucial in architectural education to teach learners how participatory processes can both challenge and support existing institutional frameworks, promoting collaborative design justice. This tool provides valuable insights, especially for those involved in education organisation, engagement, and equity. Effective learner, family, and community participation in school governance and decision-making occurs when participatory efforts work in tandem with school administration. In architectural pedagogy, effective learner, community, and stakeholder participation in design governance and decision-making is most successful when participatory efforts complement professional expertise and institutional goals, nurturing co-creation and shared ownership.

WITH WHOM?

Educators and researchers guide the process, connecting learners with experts and government representatives for collaborative activities.

HOW?

The Democracy Cube is a model that helps us understand how power, participation, and communication work in different decision-making processes. It breaks things down into three parts: the level of power people have, how participants are chosen, and how they communicate and make decisions. In the context of socially situated architectural education, the Democracy Cube is useful for exploring how power is shared between community members, learners, and professionals during design projects. First, “forms of authority and power” show the different levels of influence people can have in design and planning. This can be anything from benefiting indirectly from decisions to having full control over design choices. These levels include personal benefits, influencing others through communication, advisory roles, sharing governance, and direct authority. Second, “modes of communication and decision-making” explain how people get involved in projects. This ranges from just observing, to expressing opinions, negotiating, and actively working together in workshops. It covers things like listening, sharing preferences, debating, bargaining, and using expertise. Finally, “methods of participant selection” describe how people are chosen to take part. This can be limited to professionals or elected officials, or more open approaches like inviting community members to join, randomly selecting residents, or encouraging public input through online platforms and meetings. These methods include experts, representatives, stakeholders, random selection, targeted recruiting, self-selection, and wide public participation.

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Expert Panels



WHAT?

An Expert Panel is an assembly of independent specialists convened primarily to extract technical conclusions and recommendations for analysing a specific issue, guided by predefined criteria and a work plan. The principal responsibility of an Expert Panel typically involves synthesising diverse inputs to generate a report that presents a vision and/or recommendations for future possibilities and requirements related to the topics under examination. Specific tools may be utilised to recruit and motivate panel members, allocate tasks, and encourage the sharing and advancement of knowledge. Typically, a diverse array of experts is involved, drawing on various fields of expertise. When applied to architecture and design education, Expert Panels can provide critical feedback on student projects, design proposals, or urban interventions, helping learners understand technical, social, and environmental considerations from multiple professional perspectives.

WHY?

Expert panels facilitate consensus-building among participants or the formulation of a set of recommendations. These recommendations or proposals can subsequently be submitted to decision-making bodies. They are frequently employed in situations where the issue is highly disputed, and decisions may carry potential legal consequences or where optimal outcomes, grounded in expertise, are crucial. Expert Panels provide citizens with the opportunity to consider a range of well-informed viewpoints before making decisions. Finally, they stand out for their efficiency, delivering results with optimal use of time and resources, while also enhancing the credibility of the conclusions reached. In architectural pedagogy and practice, Expert Panels can be particularly valuable for exposing learners to diverse disciplinary and professional perspectives, fostering critical reflection on contested design decisions, and situating architectural knowledge within broader social, legal, and cultural contexts.

WITH WHOM?

The activity is facilitated by educators, developed mostly by experts in collaboration with researchers and learners for the working meetings and all the stakeholders for the public panel meetings.

HOW?

The groundwork for an Expert Panel involves several key steps: outlining the task, determining the ideal composition of the panel, and subsequently recruiting panel members, a chair, and support staff. Once assembled, the Expert Panel delves into investigating and studying the assigned topics, presenting their conclusions and recommendations through written reports, typically progressing through three distinct stages. The first stage, the preparation phase, entails meticulously defining the project to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the task's nature, objectives, and scope. This involves recruiting panel members and support staff, considering the panel's composition and balance, defining the roles of the panel chair, establishing guidelines for interviews, and ultimately creating a nomination package for the panel, incorporating a technical writer. The second stage involves conducting the expert panel, with a focus on understanding the roles of panel members, adhering to guidelines for panel meetings, and ultimately preparing the expert panel report. In the third and final stage, the panel report is presented. Arrangements may include scheduling a public session following the submission of the final report, during which the report's issues, findings, conclusions, and recommendations are unveiled. If desired, the report may undergo peer review before public dissemination. In architecture and urban design, Expert Panels can be particularly effective in evaluating complex projects that intersect technical, social, and environmental considerations. By assembling specialists from different disciplines—such as engineering, planning, sustainability, and cultural heritage—panels provide balanced perspectives that enrich decision-making. This multidisciplinary input ensures that proposed solutions are not only technically sound but also contextually sensitive and future-oriented.

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Ladder of Participation



WHAT?

It serves as a framework to empower citizens in social decision-making and facilitate the equitable distribution of social power. Citizen involvement is likened to a metaphorical “ladder,” where each step symbolises heightened levels of citizen influence, authority, and empowerment. This Ladder serves as a tool to identify power dynamics during crucial decision-making processes. Its enduring relevance stems from the persistent challenges people face, where existing systems often neglect perspectives beyond the lowest tiers of the ladder.

WHY?

The Ladder of Participation consists of eight “rungs” that illustrate a continuum of participatory power, ranging from “nonparticipation (no power)” to “degrees of tokenism (superficial power)” to “degrees of citizen participation (genuine power).” This model provides valuable insights into citizen engagement within participatory projects or initiatives. Citizen participation equates to citizen power. Mere participation without a genuine redistribution of power, such as financial resources or decision-making authority, results in a situation where the powerholders can claim that all perspectives were considered, but only a select few actually benefit. This approach perpetuates the existing power imbalances, highlighting the stark contrast between powerless ordinary citizens and influential individuals.

WITH WHOM?

The activity is led by educators and researchers, involving learners in collaboration with community residents, and supported by NGOs, government, and private and public institutions.

HOW?

The Ladder of Participation has distinct stages. It is important to review and plan the level of real commitment to the project to ensure citizen participation. At the initial levels, manipulation and therapy are non-participative methods aiming to educate or cure participants. The focus here is on achieving public support through public relations, with decisions primarily made by a select group. Moving up, informing marks a crucial step where information flows one-way without feedback. Consultation involves surveys and meetings but is often perceived as a superficial exercise. Placation allows citizens to provide input, but ultimate judgement lies with the powerful. In partnership, negotiation between citizens and those in power redistributes decision-making responsibilities. Delegation grants citizens decision-making power but within predefined boundaries. At the highest rung, citizen control empowers ordinary people to handle all aspects of program management independently, minimising intermediary influence. Your position and tactics as an activist/designer/facilitator may change over time in relation to various phases and specific activities of the project.

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Novelty, Attractiveness, Feasibility Study (NAF)



WHAT?

This approach offers a rapid and straightforward means of evaluating a set of ideas based on three criteria: novelty, attractiveness, and feasibility. To implement this method, each idea is assigned a score within a specified numerical range, considering novelty, attractiveness, and feasibility. In architectural education and design practice, this method allows learners or teams to critically assess design proposals, balancing creativity, user appeal, and practical implementation. By doing so, it also fosters reflection on social, cultural, and environmental implications, encouraging ideas that are not only innovative but responsive to real-world contexts. Novelty gauges the originality and newness of the idea, while Attractiveness evaluates how well the solution addresses the problem. Feasibility, on the other hand, assesses the practical relevance of an idea and its workability in real-world scenarios. Scores are assigned independently for each criterion, and the ideas are then ranked based on their total score. Essentially, the NAF method provides a simple mechanism for scoring ideas to determine their merit for further pursuit or implementation.

WHY?

Its purpose is to gauge intuitive responses to specific ideas. As a tool reliant on emotions, it serves as a valuable supplement to logical and quantitative decision-making techniques. Additionally, it evaluates the efficacy of the creative thinking proposed, offering an overall assessment of the likelihood of success for any given creative concept. This, in turn, provides insights into alternative approaches to enhance the chances of success during the development or implementation of an idea. Moreover, this tool is versatile, suitable for both individual and group use, and particularly fitting for the initial stages of the idea selection process. Moreover, this tool is versatile, suitable for both individual and group use, and particularly fitting for the initial stages of the idea selection process.

WITH WHOM?

Educators and researchers guide the process, connecting learners with experts.

HOW?

Before the session begins, distribute blank cards to all participants and designate a volunteer facilitator. Subsequently, proceed through the following three stages. Firstly, address a problem and initiate a brainstorming session. Participants should write down each idea on individual cards within 20 minutes. Eliminate duplicates and combine similar ideas to create a distinctive set. Secondly, the group should systematically evaluate each idea. Employ a voting system for Novelty, Appeal, and Feasibility Study. Participants individually score each category on separate cards, considering subjective questions and adhering to scoring rules (assigning a score from 1 to 10 for each criterion). Consolidate all three scores on a single card and submit it to the facilitator. Repeat this process until all ideas have been assessed, completing this stage in 15 minutes. Thirdly, for result analysis, the facilitator should review each idea sequentially. Calculate average scores for Novelty, Appeal, and Feasibility Study, sharing the results with the group for discussion. The focus here is on identifying ideas that are both new and appealing, with less emphasis on feasibility. Continue this process for each idea within a 30-minute timeframe. Conclude the session with a comprehensive discussion on all ideas, drawing conclusions and outlining subsequent actions within a 15-minute period. The NAF method enables teams to prioritise design solutions not only for technical feasibility but also for innovative spatial concepts and human-centred appeal, helping ensure that proposals are imaginative, desirable, and contextually appropriate.

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Peer to Peer



WHAT?

In education, Peer to Peer is a teaching method where learners take an active role in evaluating and reviewing each other's work. Instead of receiving feedback only from the educator, learners exchange observations, constructive criticism, and suggestions among themselves. This process involves various activities such as peer assessment, reciprocal feedback, and peer tutoring. These practices are based on the idea that learners, by working together, can learn more collaboratively, supporting each other in improving their work. Peer to Peer creates a dynamic where learning becomes a shared, interactive process, where everyone actively participates in building knowledge, rather than passively receiving instruction. In architectural education, Peer to Peer methods foster socially situated learning by encouraging learners to critically engage with the design decisions of others, reflect on social, cultural, and spatial implications, and collaboratively refine design solutions in a studio context.

WHY?

Peer to Peer is implemented in education for several reasons. First, it promotes active learning, where learners are not passive recipients of information but are involved in the process of critical reflection. This approach helps them become more aware of their own strengths and challenges. By reviewing others' work, learners learn to identify methods that they can apply to their own work, thus improving their self-assessment skills. Moreover, Peer to Peer fosters a sense of shared responsibility. When learners are responsible not only for their own learning but also for contributing to that of their peers, it enhances the sense of community within the classroom. This dynamic helps create a more cooperative learning environment, where everyone feels engaged in the educational process. Peer to peer also develops social skills such as communication, collaboration, and conflict management. Interacting with peers through feedback and review helps improve their ability to express opinions constructively and work in teams, which are critical skills both academically and professionally. Another significant benefit of peer to peer is the improvement of feedback. Often, learners find feedback from their peers less hierarchical than that from educators, making them more open to discussing mistakes and necessary improvements. Additionally, the ability to receive feedback more quickly facilitates a more immediate and iterative correction process, helping learners improve their work more promptly.

WITH WHOM?

The activity is facilitated by educators, involving learners in collaborative learning.

HOW?

Peer to Peer practices in architecture education involve structured opportunities for learners to provide feedback on each other's work, fostering reflection, critical thinking, and collaborative learning. The process begins by establishing clear guidelines for constructive critique, focusing on suggestions, observations, and insights rather than formal grading. Learners present their work to peers, either individually or in small groups, allowing for multiple perspectives to inform the evaluation of ideas, techniques, and design solutions. During the feedback phase, peers articulate their observations, highlighting strengths and identifying potential areas for improvement. Learners are encouraged to justify their comments, provide examples, and explore alternative approaches, helping both the presenter and reviewer deepen their understanding of design intentions and implications. This reflective dialogue enables learners to see their work from different vantage points, developing a more nuanced appreciation of architectural decisions and outcomes. Following individual feedback sessions, collaborative group work can be introduced, where learners collectively tackle a shared design problem. Responsibilities and resources are divided among group members, and iterative review sessions ensure that contributions are integrated cohesively. This dynamic encourages democratic and participatory learning, where accountability and mutual respect underpin the exchange of ideas. The Peer to Peer process concludes with a reflective synthesis, allowing learners to identify lessons learned, refine their own work, and internalise feedback strategies that can be applied to future projects.

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Pop-up Infrastructure



WHAT?

Pop-ups Infrastructures are temporary installations that use easily deployable props to show possible modifications to a street, intersection or public space. They serve to demonstrate how the environment can influence activity and behaviour. Select temporary elements for installation, such as cycle paths, traffic calming planters, urban design elements, benches, pylons and others. These installations provide a means to illustrate potential modifications to streets, intersections, or public spaces, allowing for evaluation. The duration of the installation can vary from a few hours to days or even weeks, depending on its scale and the materials used. In architectural pedagogy, pop-ups offer learners a method to test socially inclusive interventions in real contexts, engaging with community members and assessing how temporary changes affect diverse users and social dynamics.

WHY?

Permanent changes in the built environment can sometimes be slow to implement. Pop-up infrastructure projects offer a faster, more cost-effective, and community-driven approach to enact design solutions. They demonstrate how the environment can impact activity and behaviour, making it easier to evaluate proposed changes, and how residents' design visions can enhance the safety and vibrancy of public spaces. Pop-ups are not only enjoyable but also serve as effective advocacy tools, shifting the focus towards empowering residents and groups to shape their neighbourhoods through direct action. By utilising non-traditional building materials and cost-effective prefabricated methods, such as temporary paint, cones, freestanding delineators, moveable street furniture, and barriers, they shift the focus towards empowering residents and groups to shape their neighbourhoods through direct action. In architectural pedagogy and practice, Pop-up Infrastructure exercises allow learners to engage directly with communities, experiment with temporary interventions, and understand how social context influences design decisions, fostering a socially situated approach to spatial problem-solving.

WITH WHOM?

Educators and researchers guide the process, connecting learners with key stakeholders for collaborative activities.

HOW?

Before deploying this tool, it is advisable to collaborate with your municipality and other local partners to develop and implement your pop-up. Firstly, document the existing street or space usage before the pop-up, and assess how it evolves during the intervention. Key metrics to measure may include trends in traffic speed, active transportation usage, the duration people spend in the space, and more. Take pictures of the site's current conditions and conduct on-site surveys to gauge public feelings. Secondly, workshop the concept with residents, considering the incorporation of additional tools like a Design Charrette. Thirdly, prepare materials based on the planned infrastructure, such as pylons, chalk paint, planters, bike lane stencils, benches or chairs, and movable curbs. Fourthly, execute the installation of pop-up features according to your plan. Sixthly, closely observe and document the use of the space—has it deviated from the baseline data collected before the pop-up? Capture photos as well. Seventhly, conclude by generating a concise report detailing the successes or shortcomings of your pop-up exercise. By designing temporary interventions, learners learn to analyse how built environments influence behaviour, accessibility, and social interaction. This practice encourages reflection on inclusivity, safety, and the ethical implications of urban design, fostering context-sensitive, participatory, and socially responsive design thinking.

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Self-Evaluation in Architectural Design Studios



WHAT?

Self-Evaluation is an educational method that enables learners to reflect on and assess their own work independently. In the pedagogy of architecture, it represents an alternative to traditional top-down evaluation, which mainly relies on the judgement of educators (both in the final exam and during interim critiques). Integrating this tool with other assessment methods, such as peer to peer review and feedback from peers, creates a more participatory learning environment focused on personal development and empowerment. Self-Evaluation not only fosters greater learner engagement in the learning process but also helps them develop critical and reflective skills concerning their learning processes and designs. This promotes a more autonomous and responsible approach to their education, shifting the “decision-making power” to involve learners more directly. In this context, learners assess not only the final outcomes but also the process followed to achieve them, which is particularly relevant in a design studio, where the creative process is as crucial as the final product.

WHY?

The adoption of Self-Evaluation in architecture courses is based on several benefits. Firstly, it promotes the development of critical thinking, self-correction, and personal awareness. Additionally, it encourages greater transparency and participation in the evaluation process, making learners more aware of the quality criteria required in their educational path. This method allows learners to identify their strengths and weaknesses, fostering a more responsible and autonomous approach to their learning. Furthermore, Self-Evaluation enhances the understanding and ownership of learning outcomes, and it can encourage greater creativity and innovation.

WITH WHOM?

The activity is facilitated by researchers and educators, involving learners alongside educational institutions.

HOW?

Self-Evaluation in architectural education can be implemented as a structured process that guides learners to critically reflect on their learning, decisions, and design outcomes. The process begins by introducing clear criteria aligned with course objectives, ensuring learners understand what aspects of their work are to be evaluated. Learners are then encouraged to document their reflections using tools such as reflective journals or self-assessment forms, capturing thoughts on specific phases of their design process, including concept development, design challenges, and engagement with stakeholders. Structured reflection sessions can be scheduled throughout the semester, prompting learners to consider both successes and areas for improvement. Incorporating Self-Evaluation alongside peer feedback enhances the process, as learners can compare their own assessments with others' perspectives, fostering constructive dialogue and sharpening analytical skills. Towards the end of a course or project, learners compile their insights into reflective portfolios or final presentations, demonstrating the evolution of their ideas, strategies, and competencies. Questionnaires or guided prompts can be integrated to support targeted reflection, helping learners articulate how their work aligns with course objectives and professional standards. Self-Evaluation can also complement examinations or formal assessments, encouraging learners to critically analyse both their design work and the evaluative process itself.

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Small Experiments or Simulations



WHAT?

Simulation enables researchers or learners to conduct small experiments, like creating a small mock-up, providing immediate insights that can enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of the final design process. Rooted in the concept of the “small experiment” from environmental studies, Simulation proves valuable in refining our instincts, resolving uncertainties, and exploring ideas without unnecessary complications. Simulations allow learners to engage with real-life spatial challenges while considering the cultural, social, and environmental dynamics of communities. Experimenting in a swift, secure, and straightforward manner can promote sound decision-making.

WHY?

The aim of Small Experiments in design studios or action research projects is to facilitate a process whereby learners or researchers can experiment with ideas that residents have been contemplating. This approach allows learners and residents to test their ideas and obtain immediate feedback. It is crucial to assess significant ideas before proceeding with full-scale implementation. Particularly when a proposed idea carries the potential for high costs or risks, conducting a small-scale experimental simulation is a wise, cost-effective, and secure approach. The key is to maintain the simulation on a modest scale, ensuring it is manageable and preventing overwhelming mistakes. These Simulations or Small Experiments offer a platform for collaboration between citizens and experts, enabling local talent to contribute to solutions that preserve local identity and suit the specific context. They also promote innovations that align with the context. Additionally, engaging in Simulations allows for valuable information to be gathered without making costly commitments that might later need to be reversed.

WITH WHOM?

The activity is facilitated by educators, involving learners alongside community residents, social collectives, and service clubs, with guidance and support from institutions, NGOs, educational institutions, and researchers.

HOW?

The topics that should be taken into account when planning an effective Simulation or a Small Experiment include the following: First and foremost, establishing a clear goal or purpose is crucial. A Small Experiment should focus on a specific topic rather than trying to cover everything. Having a well-defined question not only serves as motivation but also aids in shaping a study likely to yield valuable results. One of the most significant challenges arises from insufficient effort in thoroughly considering what one aims to learn. Secondly, careful tracking is essential. Being observant and systematic, and keeping track of key aspects of the situation, are vital components. It is necessary to stay mindful of the ongoing developments, and the information gathered should be manageable and organised. Lastly, dissemination of the results is essential for the Small Experiment to be meaningful. Sharing the outcomes is crucial for their usefulness. Depending on the context, sharing this information can inform participants that their contributions made an impact. It also provides an opportunity to inform a broader audience about the lessons learned and the subsequent steps that can be taken as a result of the experiment.

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Socially Situated Crit



WHAT?

A “crit” (short for “critique” or “criticism”) is a key pedagogical method used in architectural education where learners present their design work to a group of critics, which typically includes tutors, peers, and external professionals, who provide feedback and engage in a discussion about the strengths and weaknesses of the work. The crit serves as both an assessment tool and a learning exercise, allowing learners to refine their design ideas and develop critical thinking, presentation skills, and the ability to engage with feedback constructively. When embedded in architectural pedagogy, Socially Situated Crits encourage learners to consider not only formal and technical aspects of design but also social, cultural, environmental, and ethical implications, fostering a more reflective and contextually aware design practice. A crit can be considered socially situated when it is contextualised within and responsive to the social, cultural, political, and environmental dynamics that surround both the design project and the educational environment in which it takes place. This means that instead of being purely focused on the aesthetic, technical, or formal aspects of a design, the crit actively engages with broader societal issues, acknowledging how architecture intersects with human experiences, power structures, community needs, and cultural narratives. In summary, an architectural crit becomes socially situated when it moves beyond the technical aspects of design to actively engage with the broader societal contexts and implications of architectural work. This approach helps learners develop a more critical, empathetic, and socially aware design practice that acknowledges architecture’s potential to shape and be shaped by social realities.

WHY?

The crit provides an opportunity for learners to receive formative feedback on their design work. It is designed to help learners understand how their design decisions are perceived, giving them insights into what works and what doesn’t. The feedback is not only focused on technical aspects but also addresses conceptual, aesthetic, and contextual issues in the design. By hearing critiques from multiple perspectives, learners learn to evaluate their design process and outcomes more rigorously. The crit brings together “multiple viewpoints,” often including tutors, peers, and external critics (such as practising architects or engineers). This diversity of perspectives enriches the feedback process, exposing learners to various ways of thinking about architectural problems and solutions. The crit is a pedagogical tool that emphasises not just individual performance but also collaboration and peer learning. Students learn from the feedback given to their peers, fostering a collaborative studio culture where ideas are shared and debated. The crit also acts as a public platform where design ideas are tested in a social context, mimicking the collaborative nature of professional architectural practice. Framing the crit as socially situated highlights its dual role: it is not only an evaluative practice but also a cultural and relational one, where power dynamics, communication styles, and institutional values shape the learning experience. Recognising this dimension allows educators and learners alike to critically reflect on how feedback is given and received, ensuring it remains a constructive and inclusive practice. In conclusion, it teaches students how to present, defend, and refine their design ideas, preparing them for the realities of the professional world.

WHITH WHOM?

The activity is facilitated by educators, involving learners in collaboration with peers, external professionals, stakeholders, the local community, and political representatives.

HOW?

Conventionally, crit learners typically present their work in front of the jury and their peers. This is followed by a discussion where the jury and audience provide feedback: the jury, or panel of critics, is composed of tutors, often joined by external professionals or guest critics. A Socially Situated Crit encourages learners to understand and articulate how their designs respond to the specific social, cultural, and economic contexts of a site or community. Rather than treating projects as abstract exercises, critiques focus on how designs address real-world issues such as social justice, inclusivity, sustainability, or community identity. Socially Situated Crits invite a wider range of voices, including community members, stakeholders, or experts from other disciplines, to participate in the critique process. This inclusion ensures that the feedback reflects diverse perspectives and real-world implications, challenging learners to consider how their designs impact various groups. A Socially Situated Crit goes beyond evaluating the design's formal qualities by examining issues of power, equity, and agency. It questions how the proposed design reinforces or challenges existing power structures, who benefits from the design, and how the architectural intervention might influence or be influenced by social dynamics. Socially Situated Crits encourage a reflective and dialogic process, where learners and critics engage in a two-way exchange of ideas. Instead of a one-sided evaluation, the crit becomes a collaborative discussion where design intentions are debated in relation to societal issues, fostering a deeper understanding of architecture's role in shaping social environments. Panel members and stakeholders are briefed beforehand to focus their feedback on societal implications, inclusivity, and community impact. During the critique, learners respond to questions and comments in dialogue with the panel, reflecting on how their proposals engage with real-world issues. Observations and feedback are used to guide revisions, encouraging learners to integrate diverse perspectives and situated knowledge into their design process.

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Socially Situated Live Projects



WHAT?

A Live Project in architecture refers to an educational design project where learners work on real-world briefs in collaboration with actual clients or communities. Unlike conventional studio projects, where the design exercises are often hypothetical, Live Projects involve genuine constraints, stakeholders, and the potential for real-world implementation. These projects aim to bridge the gap between academic theory and professional practice, giving learners hands-on experience in managing architectural challenges. Live Projects in architecture can be seen as socially situated when they engage with real-world contexts and actively involve communities, stakeholders, or societal issues in the design process. Unlike theoretical or abstract studio assignments, Live Projects immerse learners in practical, socially relevant situations where their designs have tangible impacts. This allows learners to interact directly with the people, places, and social conditions that their designs will affect, fostering a deeper understanding of architecture's role in addressing societal needs and challenges.

WHY?

According to Kolb's theory of experiential learning (1984), Live Projects offer learners active, hands-on experience, enhancing their learning by doing. Live projects often engage with communities and focus on socially responsible architecture. This aligns with principles of "community-based design" and "participatory design," where architects work collaboratively with the public to shape the built environment. Learners gain practical skills such as project management, client communication, and teamwork. These projects help simulate the challenges faced in real-world architectural practice. Live Projects provide an opportunity for learners to critically reflect on their role as future architects, especially in relation to the social and ethical dimensions of their work. Engaging in Live Projects teaches learners to navigate the tensions between design intent, client expectations, community desires, and practical constraints. This reflection reinforces the idea that architects are not just creators of space but also agents of social transformation who must consider the long-term impacts of their work on society. Live Projects provide an opportunity for learners to critically reflect on their role as future architects, especially in relation to the social and ethical dimensions of their work. Engaging in Live Projects teaches learners to navigate the tensions between design intent, client expectations, community desires, and practical constraints.

WITH WHOM?

Educators lead the activity, engaging learners alongside external professionals, stakeholders, the local community, and political representatives.

HOW?

Live Projects in architecture education are structured to immerse learners in real-world contexts, engaging them directly with communities and societal challenges. The process begins with establishing contact with the community and identifying stakeholders who will contribute knowledge, experiences, and priorities. Learners collect insights through participatory activities such as workshops, interviews, site visits, and informal conversations, ensuring that the design process is informed by lived experiences. During this engagement, learners organise sessions where community members share narratives, concerns, and aspirations. These interactions are designed to be iterative: learners analyse the collected information, adapt initial design proposals, and return to the community for feedback, fostering a continuous dialogue that situates the design within the social realities of the site. Once the context is established, learners identify pressing societal issues that the project may address, such as urban regeneration, affordable housing, public space design, sustainability, or community infrastructure. The next step involves framing design objectives around social equity, environmental justice, and community well-being, ensuring that the architectural interventions respond meaningfully to these challenges. Collaboration forms a core aspect of live projects. Learners work with multiple stakeholders—including community members, local authorities, NGOs, and other professionals—co-creating solutions through participatory processes. This ensures that diverse perspectives inform the design, and that the project remains socially situated throughout its development. Feedback sessions, group discussions, and joint critique moments allow learners to refine their designs in alignment with both community needs and broader societal concerns. By structuring the project around these steps, learners are trained to view architecture not only as a formal or functional practice but as a tool for social engagement and change.

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Student Evaluation Survey



WHAT?

Student Evaluation Surveys are a powerful tool for educators feedback and learner self-reflection. Whether administered at the start, middle, or end of the year, these surveys can assist in the strategic planning of impactful classes, identifying and supporting learners facing challenges, and refining teaching methodologies. Surveys provide valuable insights into learners' experiences with socially engaged projects, helping educators tailor instruction to community contexts. This feedback loop fosters a responsive learning environment where learner voices inform the development of socially situated design practices.

WHY?

Student feedback Surveys offer a practical way to collect genuine insights that play a crucial role in refining course quality, supporting educators in their ongoing growth, and identifying areas ripe for improvement. When mid-semester evaluations are conducted, it signals to students that educators are dedicated to their success and actively seek ways to enhance the learning experience. These mid-semester feedback sessions not only enable educators to address immediate concerns but also provide an opportunity for collaborative adjustments throughout the remaining weeks of the semester. The suggestions gathered during this process become invaluable inputs, fostering a continuous cycle of improvement. If well addressed, it creates a positive environment where more interaction can be fostered, improving the relationship between educators and learners. This is essential for adapting studio projects to reflect community needs and social realities. By integrating learner perspectives, educators can better cultivate socially situated design practices that resonate with diverse urban and cultural contexts.

WITH WHOM?

The activity is initiated by educators and researchers, involving learners in collaborative learning.

HOW?

Consider these factors when conducting a Student Survey: Maintain anonymity to encourage open and honest responses. Avoid linking names to surveys, as it may influence how some students respond. Keep surveys concise, with a recommended maximum of 20 to 25 items and a few open-ended questions. Encourage participation by discussing the survey's purpose and importance in the weeks leading up to it. Share how past feedback has shaped your course adjustments. Provide a small incentive to motivate students to complete the survey. Craft clear and purpose-focused questions. Specific inquiries about activities or asking for the most significant learning point can yield more meaningful feedback. Avoid leading questions and allow for both closed and open-ended responses. Analyse the survey results to refine your teaching strategies. These Student Surveys can reveal how well studio projects engage with real community issues and social contexts.

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Students Tutor



WHAT?

Student Tutors are advanced students (typically at the graduate level or in the final year of their undergraduate studies) who assist their junior peers by offering guidance and support in architectural design studio. In general, their role includes helping in the development of design ideas, identifying and solving technical and conceptual problems, and assisting learners in understanding the expectations and objectives of studio activities. Since tutors have recently encountered similar challenges in their own studies, they can offer practical advice, perspectives, and concrete solutions based on their direct experience, making the design studio challenges more accessible to their peers. They offer horizontal critiques, lead discussions, and help students grasp architectural concepts and course requirements. Student Tutors also play a role in bridging communication between educators and learners, but in a socially-situated course, they also facilitate communication (and negotiation) between learners and stakeholders outside the university environment. In a horizontal approach to architectural pedagogy, they promote a collaborative, and negotiated dialogue approach to design. In summary, they not only transfer knowledge but also help build confidence and skills in their colleagues. Tutors are also fundamental to the course design itself, starting from the construction of the learning path that learners will later follow. With this approach, Student Tutors are involved in the course months in advance to provide their perspective on the course topics and organisation, helping to understand what might work best. Additionally, they are prepared ahead of time on the approaches to be covered, allowing them to also be trained in pedagogical themes. Therefore, they are not just supportive figures, but an integral part of the course and are considered part of the educational team. This is why they are seen as a key reference for learners.

WHY?

Learner Tutors are involved in pedagogical processes for several reasons related to the effectiveness of collaborative learning and the importance of peer learning in architectural education. They facilitate a collaborative learning environment that reflects the social and dialogic nature of architectural practice. Design, in fact, is a process fuelled by the exchange of ideas and continuous feedback. By involving tutors, a more horizontal learning community is created, where knowledge flows not only top-down (educators-learners) but also laterally, among peers. In addition to “translating” and interpreting the needs of both perspectives—on the one hand, facilitating the processes initiated by educators with learners, and on the other, “guiding” educators in shaping the course program to better suit learners’ needs—tutors also encourage a reflection-in-action approach. In this approach, learners actively seek feedback and suggestions, rather than waiting for formal evaluation from the educator. This not only improves learner engagement but also helps develop a greater sense of responsibility in their own learning journey.

WITH WHOM?

Educators engage learners in the activity.

HOW?

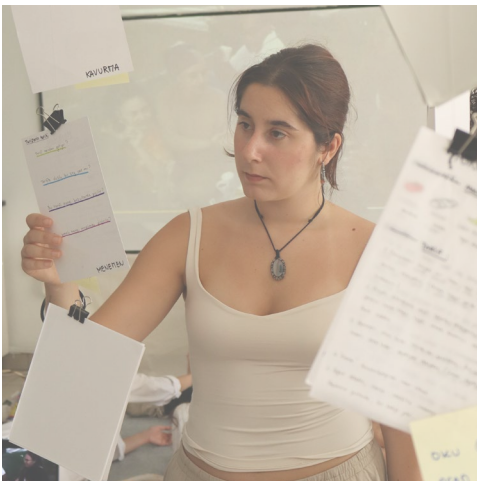
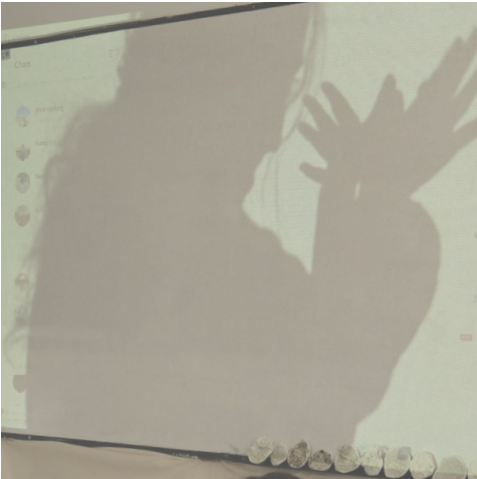
Student Tutors fulfil their role through several key actions. First, they provide continuous feedback on learners' projects, often organising informal, horizontal critique sessions, which run parallel to or complement the formal critiques provided less frequently by educators. This allows learners to refine their ideas and improve their presentation skills in preparation for public reviews. In a socially-situated studio, tutors also act as facilitators outside the university environment when learners engage with stakeholders, guiding conversations focused on negotiation and the exchange of knowledge and ideas. Tutors are trained and involved in the process of drafting the brief in advance. Often, certain lessons or concepts are explained directly to learners by the Student Tutors, such as assistance with graphics, and they also provide support during theoretical lessons. Tutors ensure that learners' design decisions remain informed by real-world social, cultural, and environmental contexts, reinforcing the socially situated nature of the studio.

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International Summer School, Istanbul 2024

EPILOGUE. SITUATING TOOLS AND METHODS

Aslihan Şenel and Caroline Newton

The research project “Socially Situated Architectural Pedagogies” has allowed us to explore situated ways of teaching and learning since the beginning of 2023. Carried on throughout four countries in architectural design studios, courses, and workshops, this research project supported us to practice situated pedagogies in multiple and varied ways. We developed our pedagogical approaches in our local contexts reciprocally and learned from each other’s experiments during this time. Beyond our local experiences and the partnership, we had the opportunity to invite other educators to share their tools and methods (Stories of Situated Pedagogies in Architecture and ... Workshop, Istanbul, 2023). This book of tools and methods tries to gather parts of our pedagogical research practices and the literature from others. The process of gathering these tools and methods from different contexts becomes another opportunity for us to discuss the significance of the situatedness of teaching and learning.

The tools and methods in this compilation are aimed to be adopted and appropriated in multiple and various ways in different educational contexts. These tools and methods may hardly be situated by nature, yet a critical and careful handling of them is what would make them situated. Among the four institutions of this research project, it has been our aim to put some of these tools and methods into practice in specific situations. In this way, the variety of outcomes multiply. In order to reflect on the multiplicity of approaches and uses that these tools and methods inspire, we decided to keep our individual voices separate in this epilogue.

Encouraging Situatedness in Design Studios through Tools and Methods

Aslihan Şenel

Situatedness as a methodological approach in education research refers to both an awareness of conditions and locations of teaching and learning, and also an ethical and political positioning of oneself (as an educator and learner) according to those conditions and locations. Concerns about the situatedness of methods and tools in education stems from the discomfort with the assumptions of universality and neutrality of research and knowledge, this is strongly expressed by feminist theorists since the late 1980s (Hartsock 1987, Harding 1987, Haraway 1988). Feminist philosopher of science Donna Haraway’s article, *Situated Knowledges*, has opened up

many debates in pedagogical research. Haraway points out that the duality of subjectivity and objectivity is misleading, as both the totality of “seeing everything from nowhere” and the relativity of “claiming to be everywhere equally” are “god tricks.” Haraway finds both of these perspectives irresponsible as they are unlocatable and argues that objectivity is only possible by accepting the subjectivity of knowledge and its production.

Situated practice may be defined as acting with an awareness of a subject’s own embeddedness within a location and acknowledging their embodied and partial view from that location. One of feminist philosophy’s persistent involvements has been in discussing the issue of “subject,” creatively through figurations that help one to both analyse and speculate about its situatedness. Through the figuration of the “cyborg” for example, Haraway (1985) refers to the subject as split and contradicting and therefore constantly in construction. Alaimo (2010) highlights, through her conceptualisation of “trans-corporeality,” that the subject is less a unity but rather the totality of specific relationships it forms with other human and non-human bodies. Braidotti (1994) proposes the figure of “nomadic subject” to problematise the multiple locations the subject inhabits while both the subject and location define and transform each other. Nemanis’ (2013) “body of water” refers to a subject that responds to the contemporary environmental crisis with an ethico-political responsibility and acknowledges the connectedness of human and non-human waters. These figurations, like many others, serve a purpose of exploring the situatedness of subjects within certain temporal and spatial relationships. They offer simultaneously an understanding of actual relationships and imagine alternative ones. Hence the use of methods of mapping and storytelling in situated pedagogies.

For a situated pedagogy, feminist educator bell hooks suggests telling personal and fictional stories and listening to others’ stories. The process of telling and listening stories in education, as hooks points out, is about accepting that knowledge is embodied, as such valuing everyone’s voices and experiences (hooks, 1994). hooks reminds us that stories help us make connections and produce situated knowledges (hooks, 2010). Dwelling on theories and practices of situated learning, posthuman new materialist feminist pedagogies expand our understanding of situatedness through highlighting interdependencies of human and non-humans and searching for ethical positionalities towards situations researchers find themselves in (Bozalek et al. 2018, Taylor 2020, Tsing and Bazzul 2022). Feminist architectural theorist Isabelle Doucet (2022) warns us about the uncritical use of stories in architectural culture, she proposes instead situated storytelling that resist generalizations and that draw attention to specificities of a situation. Considering the time constraints in architectural studios in contemporary universities and the hardships of understanding the complexities and multiplicities of sites as an outsider while keeping them alive throughout the design process, Doucet suggests situated pedagogies that encourage collaborative work, openness to multiple actors and stakes, care and humbleness. Educator and art and architectural critic Jane Rendell (2020) has developed a pedagogical approach that suggests critical spatial practices to engage with a site. The significance of this approach is that it is aimed to be transformative for both the researcher and the site due to the embodied and situated character of the practice.

Situated approaches to methods such as mapping and storytelling were applied in the Collective Imaginations architectural design studio at ITU during the SArPe project. These methods required participation and collective effort to produce multiplicity of knowledges. Attentively observing and documenting often ignored and disregarded knowledges of the everyday and the ordinary, mapping and storytelling reveal a variety of meanings attached

to a place by different inhabitants from different ethnic, economic, political sections of the society. As such, they challenge the researcher's own knowledge of the place in question. With a situated approach, these methods suggest the researchers develop a critical reflection of the role of themselves in mediating and balancing power inequalities. Playful tactics were utilised to share experiences in mapping and storytelling, such as collaborating in everyday activities with locals, cooking, and playing collective games. In our case, these methods were appropriated and transformed each term in order to adapt to the dynamics of students and the site in question. Yet, the whole process taught us to work partially and openly with these methods. Each term's work accumulated with the previous maps and stories, hardly ever being complete.

Improving Just Design with Tools and Methods

Caroline Newton

Design serves as a critical socio-political practice, capable of addressing and spatial inequalities (Newton, 2025). Design justice moves beyond aesthetics or functionality to confront structural power dynamics, redistribute spatial resources, and foster more equitable urban environments. It emphasises co-creation, critical engagement, and the imaginative rethinking of urban and architectural practices, aiming to challenge the limitations imposed by capitalist frameworks (Costanza-Chock, 2020; Newton, 2025). Just design places inclusivity and participation at its core, aiming to align design processes and outcomes with the principles of equity and social justice. While understanding the theory is essential and cultivating the right mindset is critical, a third key factor is the availability of tools and methods to translate these principles into practice. These tools empower designers to effectively implement just design principles in their work. Introducing students to such tools during their education is crucial, ensuring they carry these skills forward into their professional lives. The tools and methods developed through the SARPe project provide a valuable and practical foundation for both students and educators to begin integrating justice-focused approaches into their design processes.

Transitioning the principles of just design from theoretical frameworks to actionable plans requires that these tools and methods address the interconnected scales and stages of the design process: from conception, to implementation, and stewardship (Newton, 2025). I believe that the book offers a valuable collection of tools that are indeed practical at the different stages of the process.

These tools, such as Stakeholder Analysis, Community Mapping, and Problem Tree Analysis, provide frameworks for critical inquiry, participatory engagement, and strategic decision-making. By facilitating collaboration with diverse stakeholders and incorporating qualitative research techniques, these methods enable students to address real-world challenges while fostering a deeper understanding of socio-spatial dynamics.

Tools like Role-playing and Storytelling are instrumental in cultivating empathy and contextual awareness, helping future architects consider the lived experiences of marginalised communities. Methods such as the Mosaic Approach and Life Stories ensure that diverse voices, particularly those often excluded, are represented in the design process. Collectively, these tools operationalise principles of design justice by embedding equity, inclusion, and participatory co-creation into the educational framework.

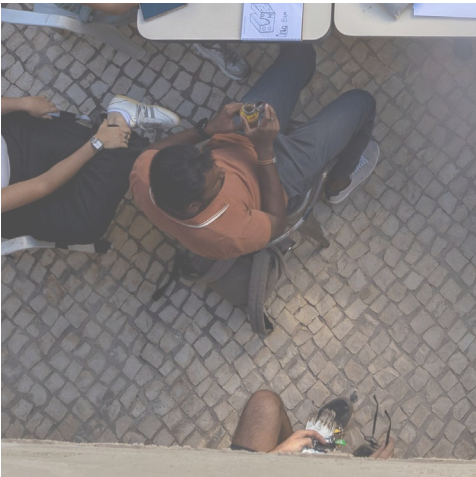
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This book was peer-reviewed by two anonymous referees. Experts in their field, these readers give their time freely to help ensure the academic rigour of our books. We are grateful for their generous and invaluable contributions.

SPACES FOR ACTION

A REPOSITORY OF TOOLS AND METHODS FOR A SOCIALY SITUATED ARCHITECTURAL EDUCATION

EDITED BY GUIDO CIMADOMO AND INGRID VARGAS DÍAZ

Spaces for Action provides a hands-on guide for teachers and students looking to make architectural learning more engaging, collaborative, and socially meaningful.

The book brings together over 80 creative tools that can be adapted to different classrooms, communities, and design challenges. The tools are grouped by teaching approaches—like cooperative teamwork, experiential learning, and transformative practices—and by the stages of the design process: identifying challenges, generating ideas, and putting them into action. Each entry gives a clear overview of what the tool is for, how it works, and what you need to make it happen. You'll also find tips on group sizes, resources, and possible collaborators, making it easy to bring these methods straight into practice.

What makes this toolkit unique is its strong link between theory and real-world application. Alongside detailed instructions, you'll discover case studies from projects such as Service-Learning and “Live Projects,” which connect design directly to community needs. Open and adaptable, this repository is a valuable resource for anyone who wants to foster creativity, collaboration, and social impact in architecture education.

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